The Fragrant Flower Blooms With Dignity

1

SAKA MIKAMI

Chapter 1: Rintaro and Kaoruko

WHAT LIES BEYOND THE CURTAINS...

The Fragrant Flower Blooms With Dignity 1

SAKA MIKAMI

JUST LET CLASSES BE OVER SOON...

...IS A WORLD I WILL PROBABLY NEVER COME IN CONTACT WITH.

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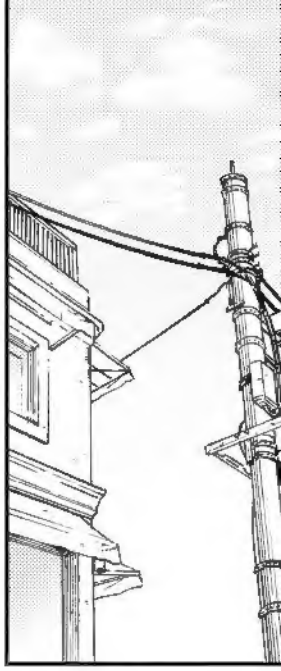
WHAT'RE THOSE GUYS UP TO *NOW?*

...HUH?



THERE'S SOME GIANT BLONDIE AT CHIDORI HIGH, *RIGHT?*
ONE OF OUR UNDER-CLASSMAN HAS A *DEBT* TO REPAY, SEE.
AND WE FIGURED WE OUGHTA DELIVER OUR REGARDS IN PERSON.

LISTEN, BUDDY!
YOU WERE THE ONES WHO BUMPED INTO US.
AND ON PURPOSE, NO LESS.

THE HELL'RE YOU...

"OH"?
RINTARO, THEN. HE SHOULD BE...
OH.

IF SO, I CAN APOLO... OH.
ZHOOM
THAT'S RINTARO FOR YA!
'SCUSE ME...
DID THESE GUYS DO SOME-THING?
LOOM

...STOP BOTHERING OTHER PEOPLE, OKAY?
WHAT THE HELL?!
YOU GUYS ...
RINTARO!
Rintaro Tsumugi (16)

I HEARD VOICES ARGUING NEAR MY PLACE LAST NIGHT, Y'KNOW.
SOMETHING ABOUT CHEATING AND IT BEING A MISUNDER-STANDING.
OH, HERE WE GO.
THE GUY ENDED UP GETTING SLAPPED.
BUT I FELT BAD JUST LEAVING HIM THERE, SO I WENT TO TALK TO HIM.

GET YOUR DAMN EYES CHECKED! WE WERE THE *VICTIMS*! ALL BECAUSE OF YOU!
THEY SAID THEIR SCHOOLMATE OWED YOU OR SOMETHING. WHAT DID YOU DO *NOW*?!
WHY ME?
HUH... OH, RIGHT, *THAT*.

YOU OKAY?
...
THEN HE TOPPLED OVER AND RAN.
NOT GONNA LIE, I FEEL BAD FOR THE GUY.
RUNNING INTO RINTARO AT NIGHT'S A NIGHTMARE.
I'D BE SCARED, TOO.
PROBABLY THOUGHT HE WAS GONNA GET KILLED OR SOMETHING!
YEAH, YEAH, IT'S ALL MY FAULT.
JUST KIDDING, JUST KIDDING!
OH, LOOK!
THEY'RE GIRLS FROM KIKYO, RIGHT?
はっ GASP

HEY, WAIT!
SPIN
OH.
FISH

I'M AFRAID ...
YOU CAN JUST THROW THAT AWAY.

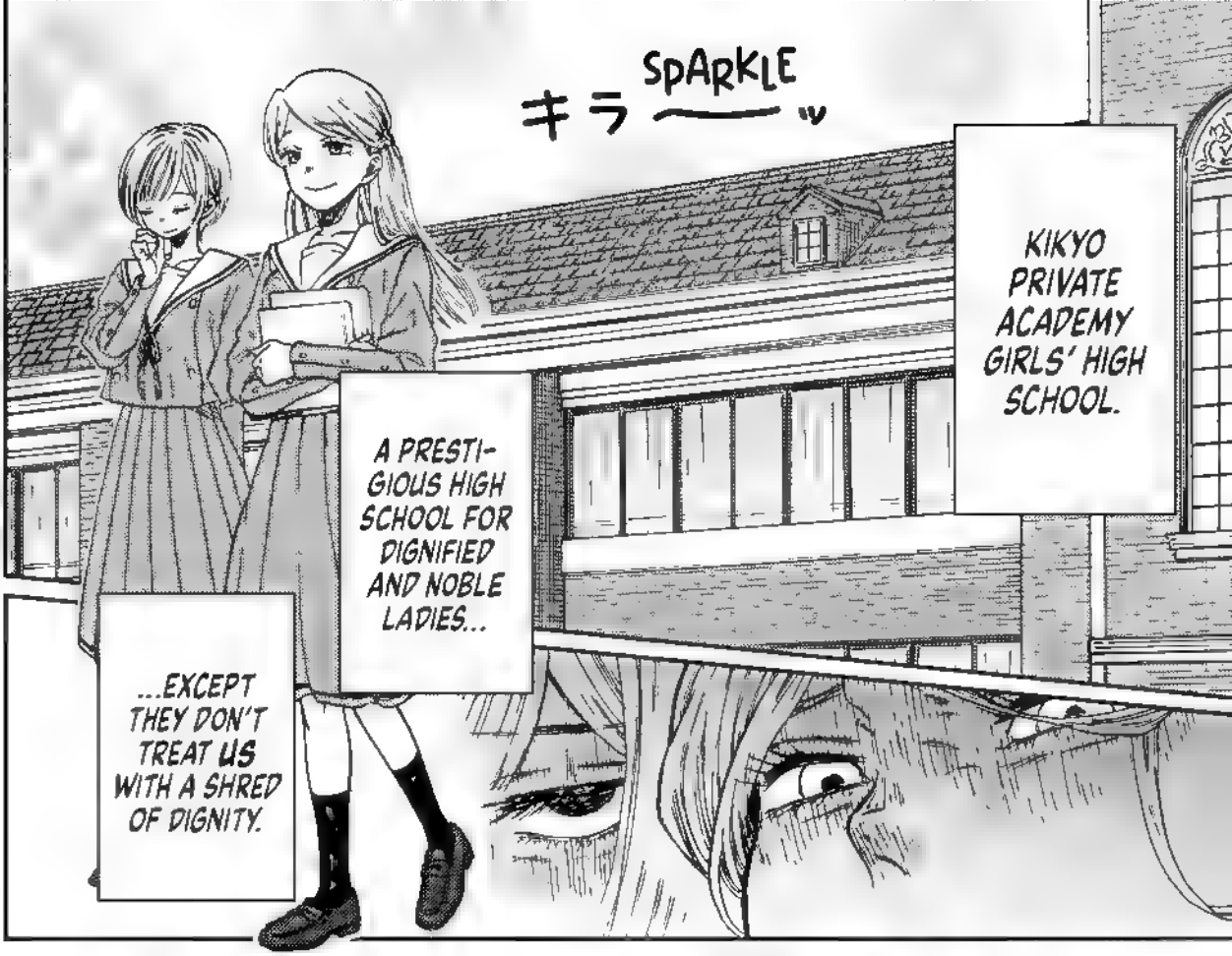
...

!
I THINK YOU DROPPED THIS.

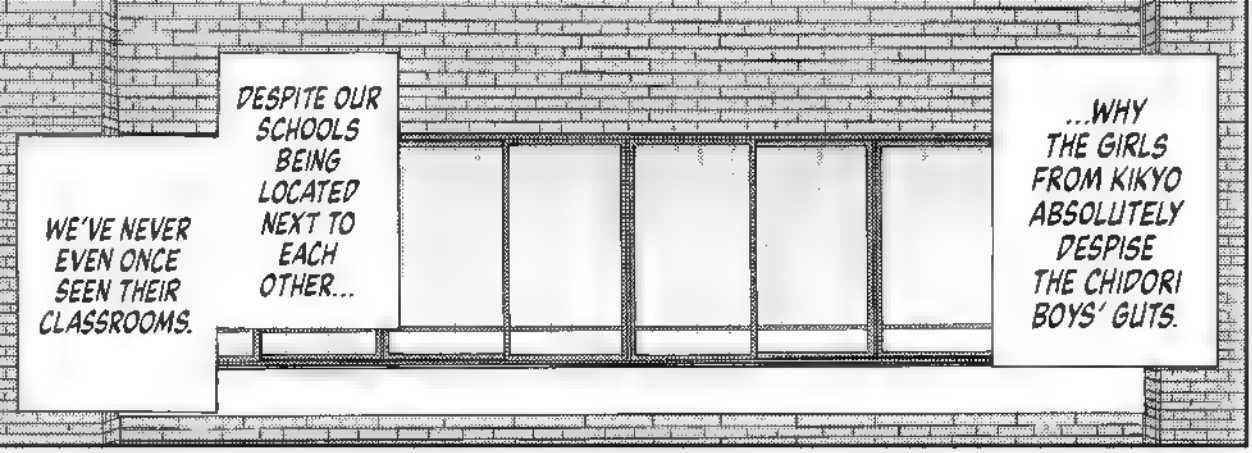
...IT'S WORTH-LESS NOW.

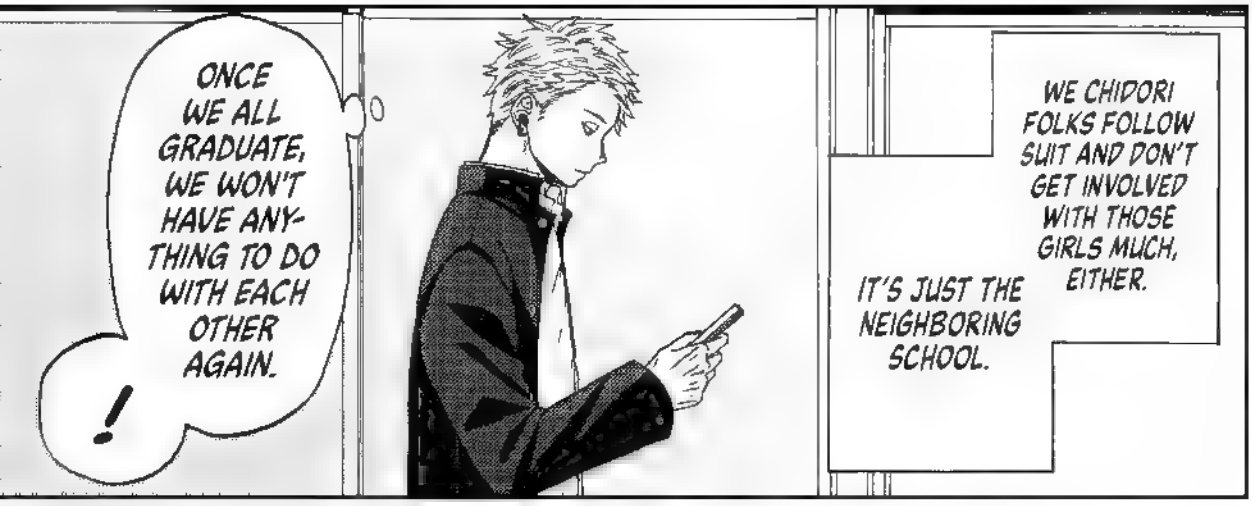
SOMEONE'S OPTIMISTIC!
I BET THEY WERE JUST FLUSTERED 'CAUSE I'M SO HANDSOME!
WELP, NOT LIKE IT MATTERS.
MAN, THEY SURE HATE OUR GUTS.
THEN AGAIN, SAME AS USUAL.

THOSE PRINCESSES DON'T WANNA DEAL WITH MORONS LIKE US.


キラ〜ッ
SPARKLE
KIKYO PRIVATE ACADEMY GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL.
A PRESTIGIOUS HIGH SCHOOL FOR DIGNIFIED AND NOBLE LADIES...
...EXCEPT THEY DON'T TREAT US WITH A SHRED OF DIGNITY.

ボロッ
SHABBY
CHIDORI PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL.
A SCHOOL FOR THE LOW CLASS, FULL OF MORONS.
IT'S FAIRLY EASY TO SEE...


DESPITE OUR SCHOOLS BEING LOCATED NEXT TO EACH OTHER...
WE'VE NEVER EVEN ONCE SEEN THEIR CLASSROOMS.
...WHY THE GIRLS FROM KIKYO ABSOLUTELY DESPISE THE CHIDORI BOYS' GUTS.


ONCE WE ALL GRADUATE, WE WON'T HAVE ANY-THING TO DO WITH EACH OTHER AGAIN.
!
IT'S JUST THE NEIGHBORING SCHOOL.
WE CHIDORI FOLKS FOLLOW SUIT AND DON'T GET INVOLVED WITH THOSE GIRLS MUCH, EITHER.

RINTARO!
AW, CRAP...

I GOTTA PASS, TODAY.
YOU GOT A GIRL-FRIEND?!
NO, I DON'T, MORON.
ACTU-ALLY...
LET'S GO HAVE SOME FUN AT KARAOKE AFTER SCHOOL!

RINTARO, YOU'RE LATE!
IT'S ALREADY 6 PM!
I STILL HAVE TO WALK HOME FROM SCHOOL, YA KNOW?!
PLUS, IT STARTED POURING ON MY WAY BACK.
Chocolate Cake 350
Cream Puff 370
Custard Pudding 340
Cookies & Cream Cupcake

SIGH
はぁ…
WE'VE ONLY GOT ONE CUSTOMER RIGHT NOW, AND THE RAIN'S GONNA KEEP OTHER FOLKS AT HOME.
ALSO... ARE YOU SURE ABOUT HAVING A DELINQUENT LIKE ME ON DUTY?

Take care!
WHY IS IT I'M THE ONE GETTING PUSHED AROUND ALL THE DAMN TIME...?
I'M COUNTING ON YOU!
WE'RE UNDERSTAFFED IN THE KITCHEN, TOO, SO YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE I COULD ASK FOR HELP.

MY FAMILY OWNS A PATISSERIE.
SO SOMETIMES, THEY FORCE ME TO HELP OUT.
IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE I'VE WORN THIS UNIFORM.
ROLL
ROLL
THOUGH I HAVEN'T TOLD MY FRIENDS...
WAIT, WHAT ABOUT THAT ONE CUSTOMER...
PEEK
ひょい

...?!

HUH?

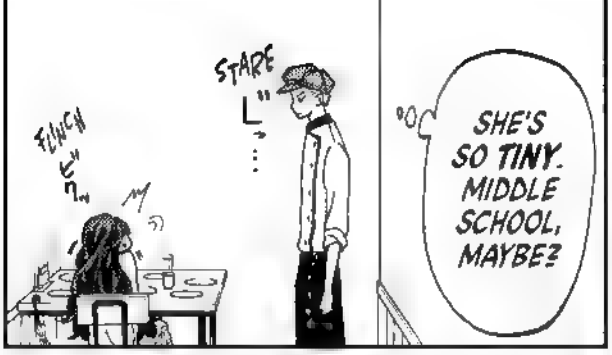
UM, MY BAD!
?!
GAH-ACK!!
?!!

DON'T BE. I MESSED UP, TOO.
PHEW IT-
I'M SORRY ABOUT THAT.
PHEW...

...
GULP
GULP
GULP
GULP
GULP
BDUM
BDUM

WATER!
ARE YOU...? H-HOLD ON!
COUGH COUGH...
URK...
JOT

WHAT A SHOCKER
...


STARE
FLINCH
SHE'S SO TINY. MIDDLE SCHOOL, MAYBE?

CLATTER
TH-THANKS! THAT WAS DELICIOUS!
?!

PLEASE COME AGAIN ...?!
WHAM
AH!

GLOOM
GUESS I... SCARED HER OFF?

I HAD NO IDEA A GIRL COULD EAT THIS MUCH...

WAGURI-SAN?
SHE STOPS BY ONCE OR TWICE A MONTH, SO WE'VE GOTTEN ACQUAINTED.
WHAT ABOUT HER?
OH, HER? THAT'S WAGURI-SAN.
SHE... RAN AWAY WHEN SHE SAW ME...
STARE

IF SHE STOPS COMING HERE, IT'LL BE ON ME. ...SORRY.
WHY WOULD IT BE YOUR FAULT?
BESIDES, SHE'S NOT THAT KIND OF PERSON.
YOU JUST BLAME YOURSELF FOR EVERY-THING.
IT'S A BAD HABIT.
DUN DUN DUN
AND IF SHE REALLY STOPS COMING AFTER THIS, THEN I'LL REEL HER BACK IN WITH OUR CAKES...
I'LL MAKE HER A SLAVE TO OUR CRE-ATIONS!

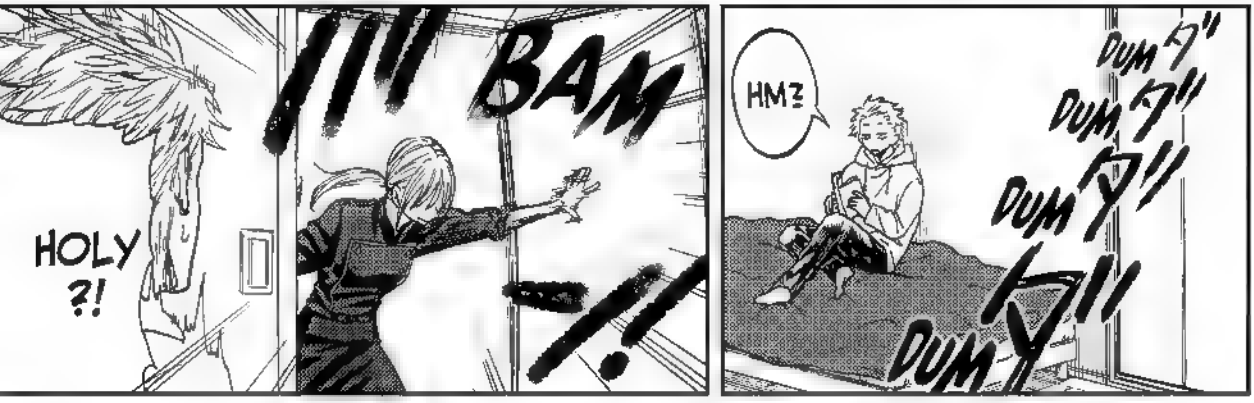
2-1
STILL, I FEEL BAD.
SADLY, I CAN'T JUST HUNT DOWN ALL THE NEARBY MIDDLE SCHOOLS SO I CAN APOLOGIZE, EITHER.
I'd get arrested.
WHAT'S WITH THE LONG FACE? SOMETHING ON YOUR MIND?
!

IS IT OUR TURN TO HEAR YOU OUT?

Y'KNOW, IT REALLY FEELS LIKE...

NOTH-ING'S ON MY MIND.
I'LL GO BUY SOME LUNCH.
!
YOU GUYS CAN START WITHOUT ME.

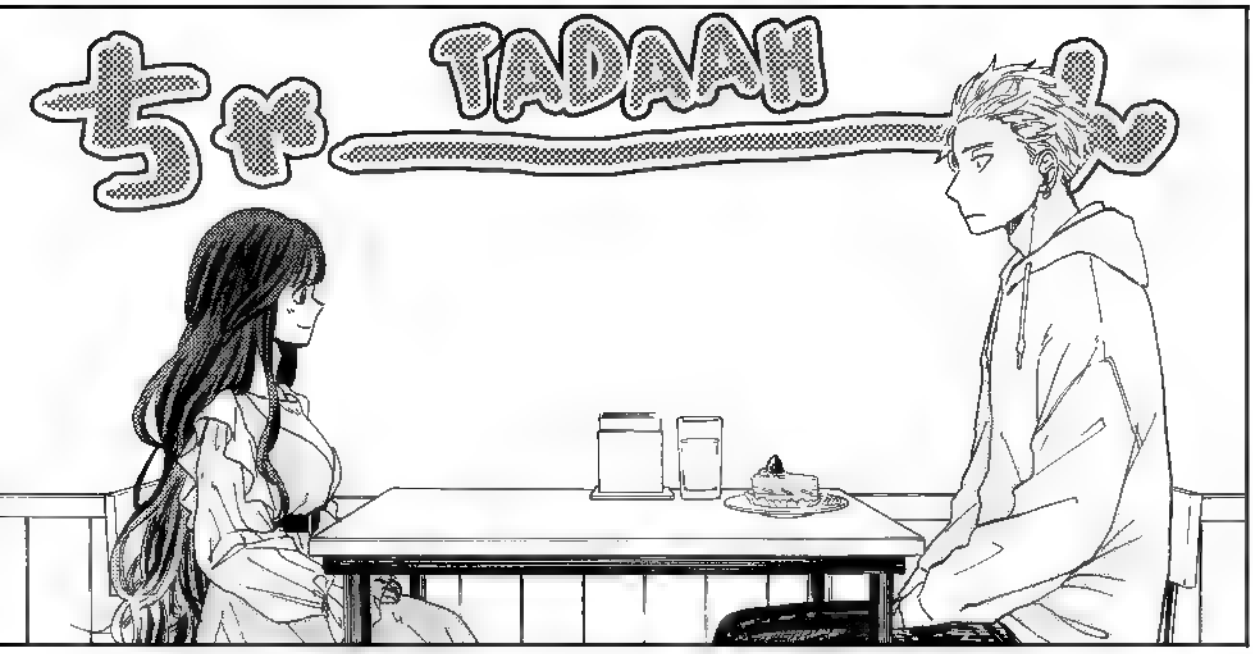
Plain
WHAT DO I DO IF SHE ENDS UP WITH TRAUMA FROM THIS...?
...RINTARO KEEPS PUTTING UP A WALL BETWEEN US.

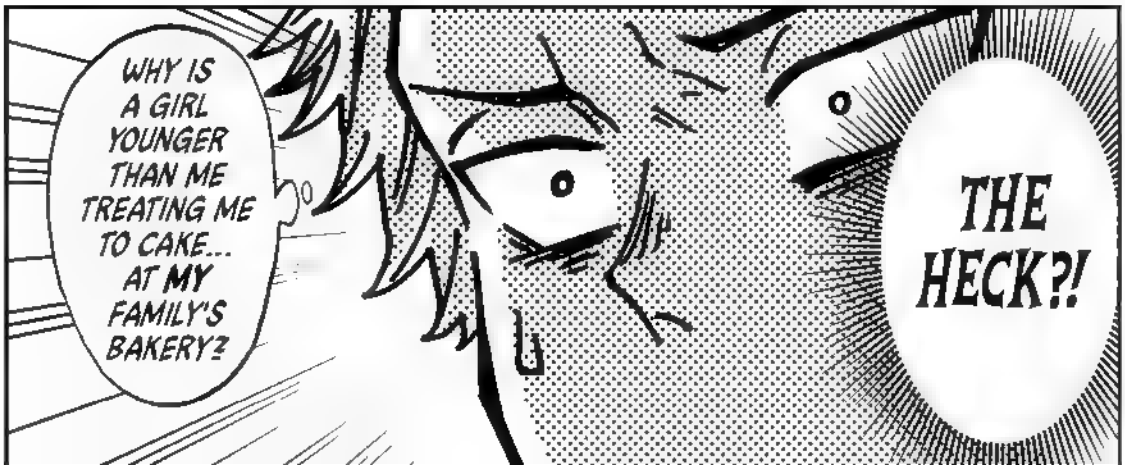

BAM
HOLY ?!
HM?
DUM
DUM
DUM
DUM

SAID SHE WANTS TO TALK WITH YOU.
WAGURI-SAN'S HERE.

AH!
UM...
HELLO.
SHE'S ACTU-ALLY HERE...
ABOUT BEFORE, I...
EXCUSE ME!
Bow ペコ!...

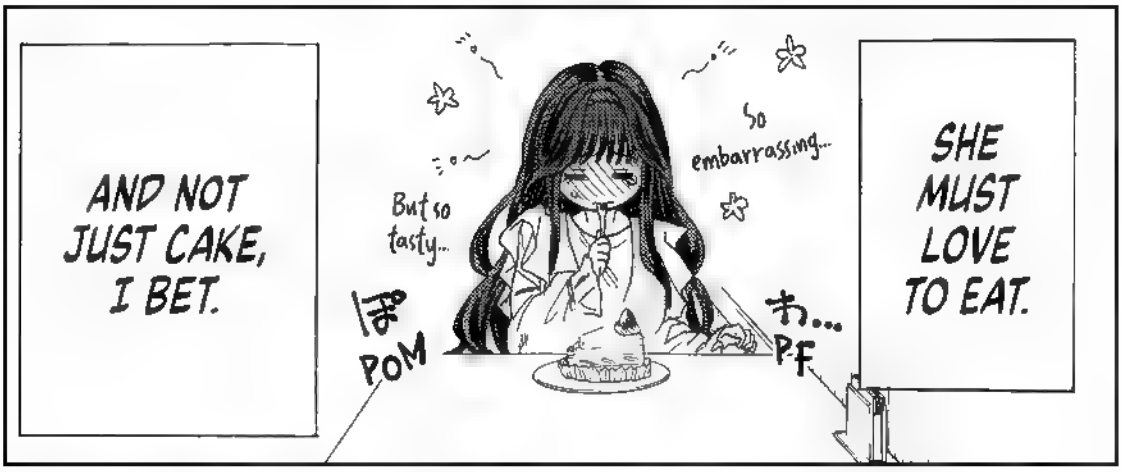
...WHAT?
LET ME TREAT YOU TO SOME-THING!
WAP


TADAAH


WHY IS A GIRL YOUNGER THAN ME TREATING ME TO CAKE... AT MY FAMILY'S BAKERY?
THE HECK?!

I'M VERY SORRY FOR RUNNING AWAY WITHOUT A WORD LAST TIME...
!
THIS SLICE OF CAKE IS MY APOLOGY, SO PLEASE ENJOY IT.
ぱ WAP っ
HOLD ON, I CAN'T JUST ACCEPT THIS...
...
...YOU CAN HAVE IT.
WHAT?!
NO, THIS IS FOR YOU...
SLIDE スッ…
IT'S FINE.

チラッ GLANCE
BUT...
キラ SPARKLE
キラ SPARKLE
キラ SPARKLE
SMILE
I CAN GUARANTEE IT'S GOOD, SO PLEASE TRY IT.
BLUSH カァ
THANK YOU VERY MUCH.
...
カチャ KLAK

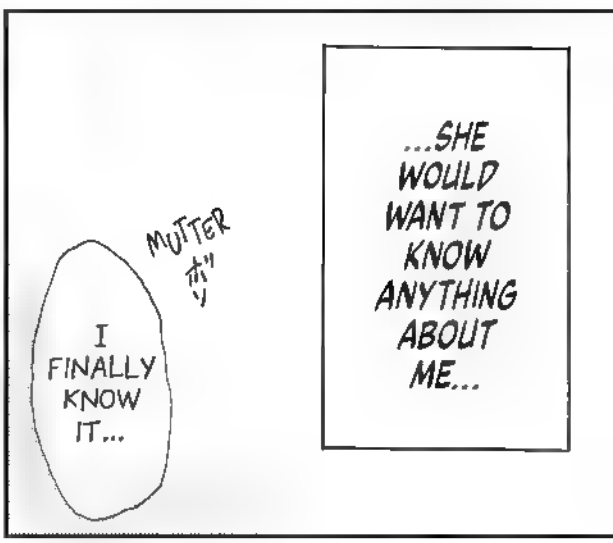

AND NOT JUST CAKE, I BET.
But so tasty...
So embarrassing...
ぽ POM
わ... P-F
SHE MUST LOVE TO EAT.

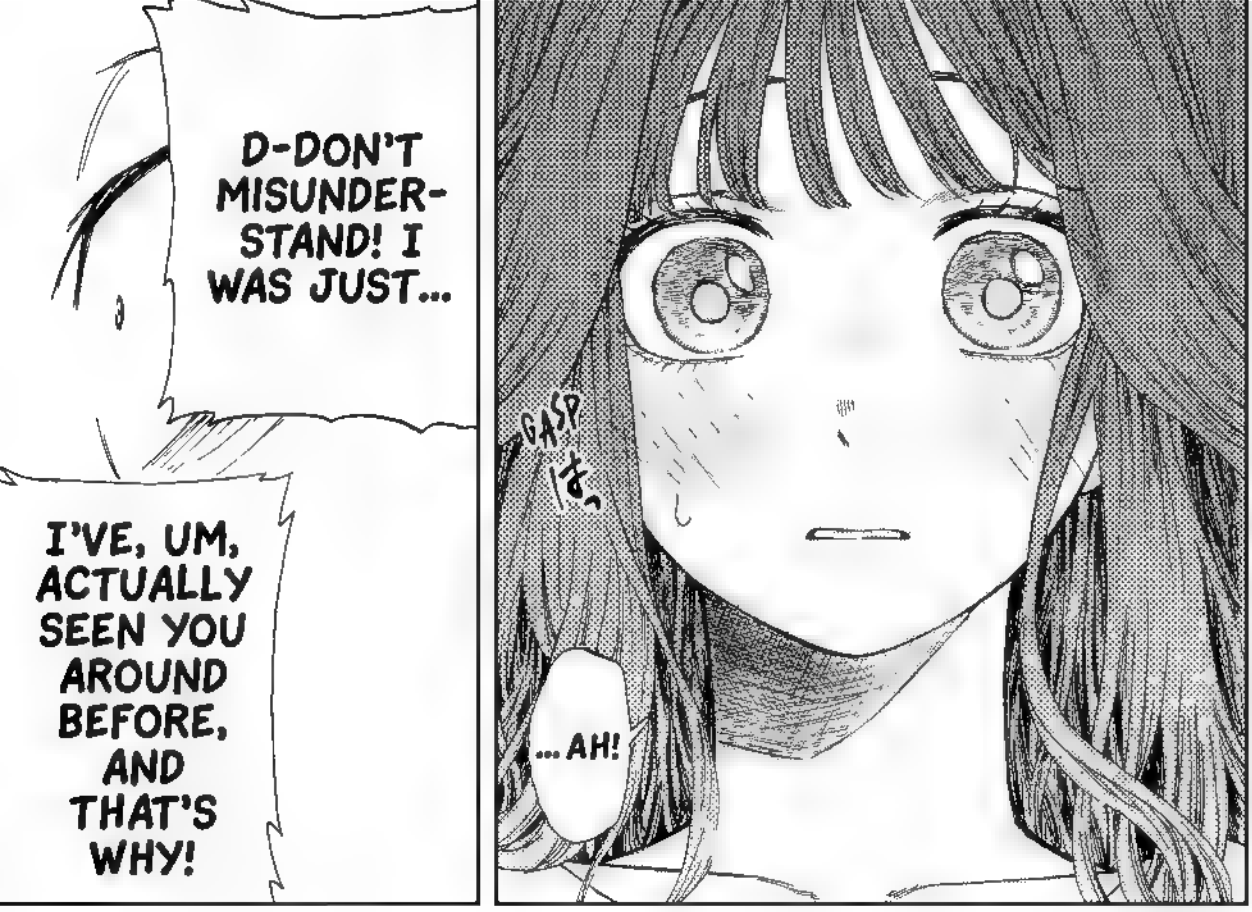
...YES.
...
HA-HA!
He couldn't lie.
...!
BECAUSE... THE AMOUNT I ATE PROBABLY ISN'T NORMAL, RIGHT?
I MUST HAVE SURPRISED YOU.
ABOUT WHAT?

...I JUST COULDN'T WAIT UNTIL I'D GOTTEN HOME.
SINCE I WAS THE ONLY ONE IN THE SHOP AT THE TIME...

I WONDER WHY...
RIN-TARO-KUN IT IS!
RINTARO-KUN, HUH...?
...RINTARO TSUMUGI.
I'M KAORUKO WAGURI.
Oh, right!
WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

FINAL-LY?


...SHE WOULD WANT TO KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT ME...
MUTTER
I FINALLY KNOW IT...


D-DON'T MISUNDER-STAND! I WAS JUST...
I'VE, UM, ACTUALLY SEEN YOU AROUND BEFORE, AND THAT'S WHY!
GASP
... AH!

...HUH?
That
SO THAT WASN'T OUR FIRST MEETING?
I HAD NO IDEA.
OH, YEAH.
YOU SOMETIMES HELP AT THIS BAKERY, RIGHT?

W-WELL ...
THAT'S BE-CAUSE ...
BUT... THEN WHY?!
WHAT?! NO! I'VE SEEN YOU HERE SEVERAL TIMES ALREADY...
So energetic...
Keep it down, Rintaro!
WAIT A SECOND! SO YOU DIDN'T DASH OUTTA HERE BECAUSE YOU WERE SCARED OF ME?!

THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME A MAN EVER...
STARED AT ME LIKE THAT...
IT MADE MY... HEART RACE.
AA-AAA-AAH...!
ぽか SPACING
ん... OUT
SAY WHAT?!
HER HEART RACED? BECAUSE OF ME? WHY?
THE AVERAGE PERSON WOULD GET SCARED WHEN THEY LOOK AT ME, RIGHT?!
THAT WAS THE CASE FOR EVERY SINGLE PERSON I'VE MET SO FAR...

WHAT?! UM, GO AHEAD!

BUT, COULD I BUY SOME MORE CAKE? IT WON'T TAKE LONG, I PROMISE!

OH, YOU'RE RIGHT...

WELL...IT'S GOTTEN DARK OUTSIDE, SO LET ME WALK YOU TO THE TRAIN STATION! IT CAN BE DANGEROUS.

SHE CAN STILL EAT MORE?!

I DON'T GET HER ONE BIT!

BUT I'VE NEVER ONCE...
...CONSIDERED YOU "SCARY," RINTARO-KUN.
BELIEVE ME, OKAY?
GRIN
NI-
THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

SLIDE
...
I SERIOUSLY DON'T GET IT.
SLAM
DUM DUM DUM DUM
QUIET DOWN, RINTARO!
IT MADE MY... HEART RACE.
MY ENTIRE LIFE...
THAT DOESN'T FIT YOUR VIBE.
...PEOPLE HAVE ONLY EVER VIEWED ME IN A NEGATIVE LIGHT.
RINTARO-KUN IS SO SCARY, RIGHT?

GAH ?!
BAM
WACK
RIN-TARO!
I SAW IT LYING OUTSIDE THE STORE WHEN I WENT TO CLOSE UP SHOP.
THIS CAKE IS WAGURI-SAN'S, RIGHT?
WHAT WAS HAT Z!
KRT

...THAT SHE GOT HOME SAFELY?!
DID YOU MAKE SURE...

...PLEASE LET GO OF ME.
A REAL CUTIE!
YOU LOOK EVEN TINIER UP CLOSE LIKE THIS!

WHY DON'T WE GO HAVE SOME FUN TOGETHER, OKAY?

YOU TWO DATING?
NO.
YEAH, THERE'S NO WAY! YOU TWO ARE POLAR OPPOSITES, AFTER ALL.
IT'S THOSE GUYS! WHAT ARE THEY DOING HERE?

OH, BY THE WAY.
WHY WERE YOU WITH RINTARO-KUN JUST NOW?
THD, THD
WHERE IS SHE?
!

HE'S FAMOUS FOR BEING TERRIFYING, RIGHT?
DID'JA KNOW HE'S A DELIN-QUENT?
DELIN-QUENT ...?
YUP! I HEARD HE WAS FEARED BY EVERYONE IN MIDDLE SCHOOL, TOO! THE FOLKS WHO KNEW HIM TOLD ME.
HE'S EVEN ATTENDING A SCHOOL FOR OUT-CASTS. HE'S SURROUNDED BY 'EM.
NOTHING GOOD WILL COME FROM BEING WITH HIM, Y'KNOW?

IS THAT SO...?
BUT WHY ARE THEY GOING OUT OF THEIR WAY FOR THIS...?
MIND YOU, I CAN'T DENY THAT BIT ABOUT OUR SCHOOL.
THAT EXPLAINS WHY THERE'S WEIRD PEOPLE CONSTANTLY APPROACHING ME

WELL...

...THAT...
...IS ABOUT WHAT I EXPECTED.
RIGHT? SO JUST HANG OUT WITH US...

BADUMP
BADUMP
!
IT'S SCARY...

...HUH?
HAVE YOU EVER TALKED TO RINTARO-KUN IN PERSON?
...HOW YOU BLINDLY BELIEVE RUMORS...
...TO DETERMINE WHAT KIND OF PERSON HE IS.
YOU CAN STILL DO THAT! I'M SURE YOU'LL QUICKLY REALIZE HOW WONDERFUL HE IS!
WHY THE HELL WOULD I?
LIKE I GIVE A RAT'S ASS IF HE'S "WONDER-FUL" OR NOT...

...
WITHOUT PROPERLY TALKING TO THEM FIRST.
CLENCH
...I WOULD APPRECIATE IT IF YOU COULD STOP SPEAKING BADLY OF PEOPLE BEHIND THEIR BACKS...
BUT AT THE VERY LEAST ...
IT'S ALL RIGHT IF YOU DON'T WANT TO.
...
IT'S HIGHLY UNPLEASANT.
CLENCH
BUT, I'VE CHANGED MY MIND.
FLINCH
---!
OUR ORIGINAL PLAN WAS TO USE YOU...
GRAB
...AND GET SOME PAYBACK ON HIM...

THWACK!!

Y-YOU!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?!
DRIP
DRIP
!
WSH
EEEK!
DUM
DUM
YOU WANTED TO GET BACK AT ME... RIGHT?
DUM
DUM
DUM

ARE YOU SATISFIED NOW?

RIN-TARO-KUN!
DASH
WE'RE VERY SORRY!

TUGL
!
YOU'RE BLEED-ING!
I SWEAR... IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT, WAGURI-SAN.
Thanks.
I'M SO SORRY!
THWACK
RATHER THAN THE ACTUAL PUNCH...
THE IMPACT OF MY HEAD HITTING THE WALL IS WHAT CAUSED THIS.
THAT DOESN'T MATTER!

YOU TOLD ME TO BELIEVE YOU, AND YET...
YOU TOOK IT ON PURPOSE?! WHY?
MY BAD... IF I KNEW THIS WOULD HAPPEN, I WOULD HAVE STOPPED HIS PUNCH INSTEAD.
AS A PUNISH-MENT...I GUESS.
NO... PLEASE, RAISE YOUR HEAD!
WAP
I'M SORRY YOU GOT DRAGGED INTO THIS MESS BECAUSE OF ME!
IT IS... MY FAULT.
GRIT
IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT, RINTARO-KUN!

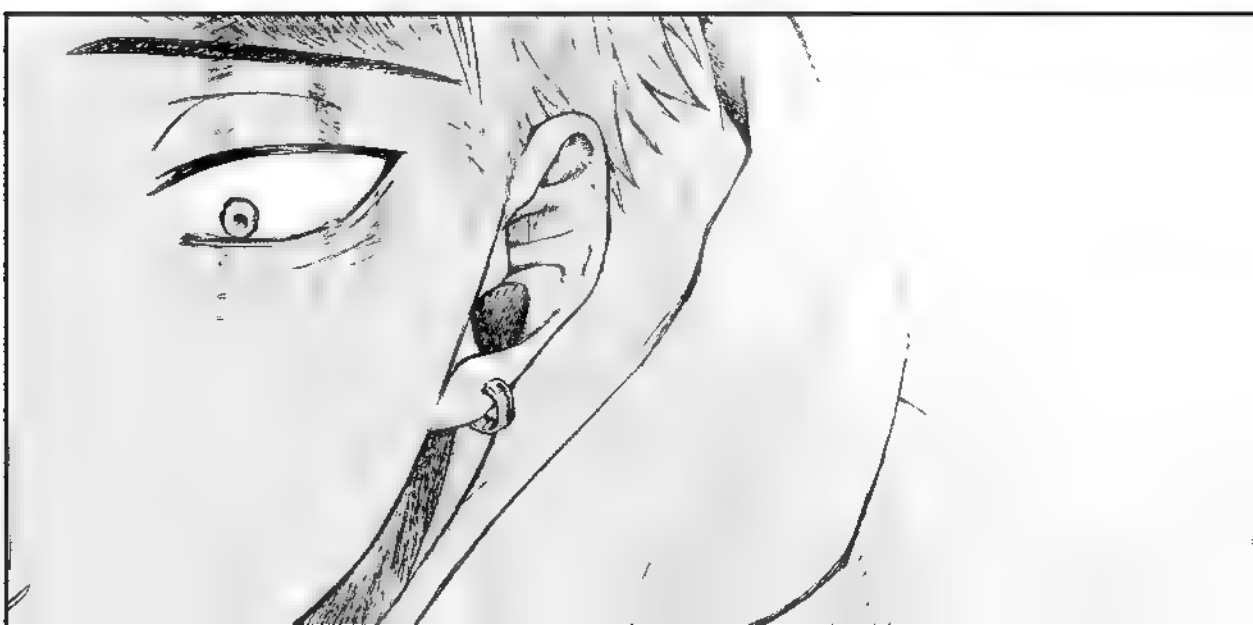
...I WOULD APPRECIATE IT IF YOU COULD STOP SPEAKING BADLY OF PEOPLE BEHIND THEIR BACKS...

WAGURI-SAN...

SHE'S SUCH A GENTLE SOUL.

IT JUST DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE TO ME.
...
IT TRULY IS A MYSTERY.
WHAT PART OF YOU IS SUPPOSED TO BE SCARY?
ALL I SEE IS A KIND SOUL...
FWSH
I'VE YET TO TELL YOU PROPERLY, HAVEN'T I?
THAT REMINDS ME...

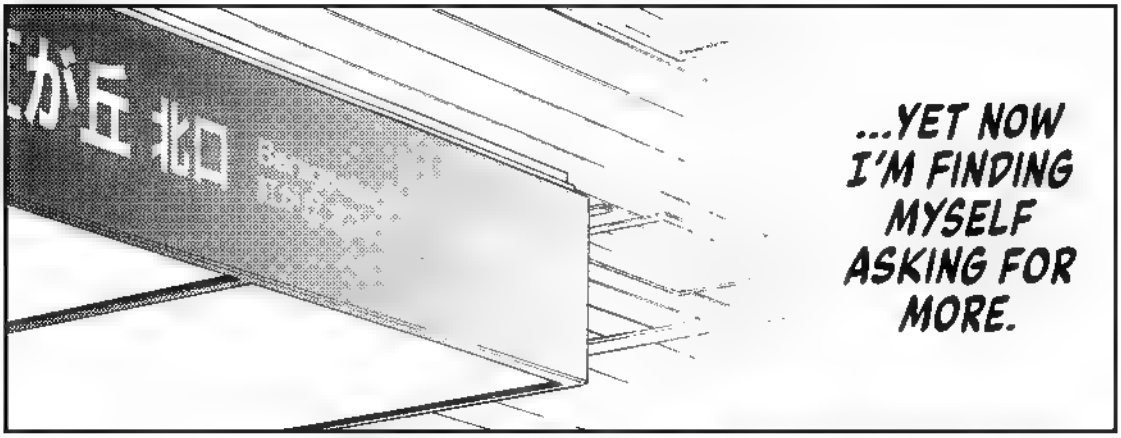
THANK YOU VERY MUCH...
FOR SAVING ME!



I'D GIVEN UP ON ALL OF IT...

I DON'T EXPECT TO BE PRAISED OR ACCEPTED.

I'M USED TO PEOPLE THINKING THE WORST OF ME BECAUSE OF MY LOOKS.

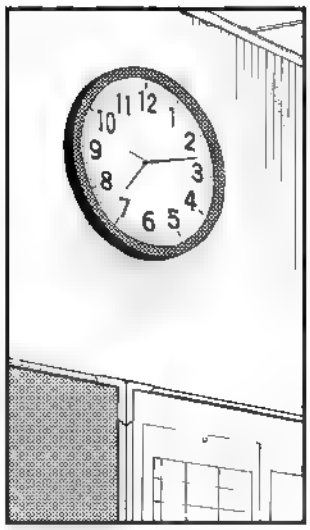


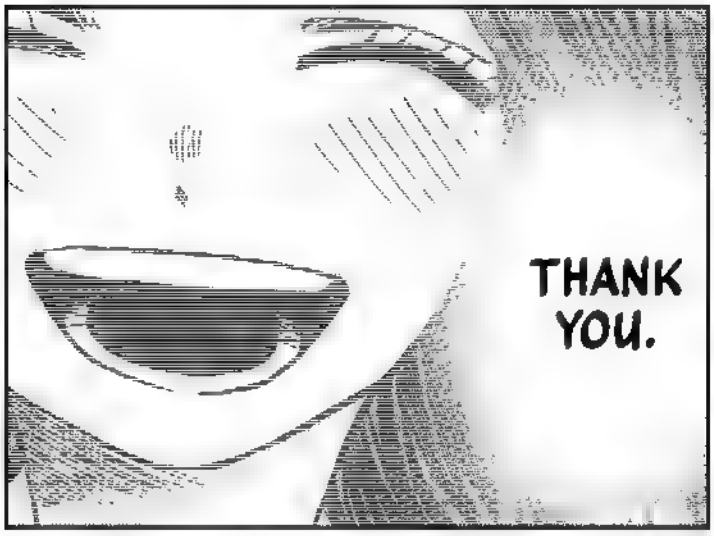
...YET NOW I'M FINDING MYSELF ASKING FOR MORE.

LET'S EAT SOME MORE CAKE NEXT TIME!
TOGETHER, OF COURSE!

YES, HELLO?
...I'M OKAY. I'M ON MY WAY HOME RIGHT NOW.
...YEAH, LET'S.

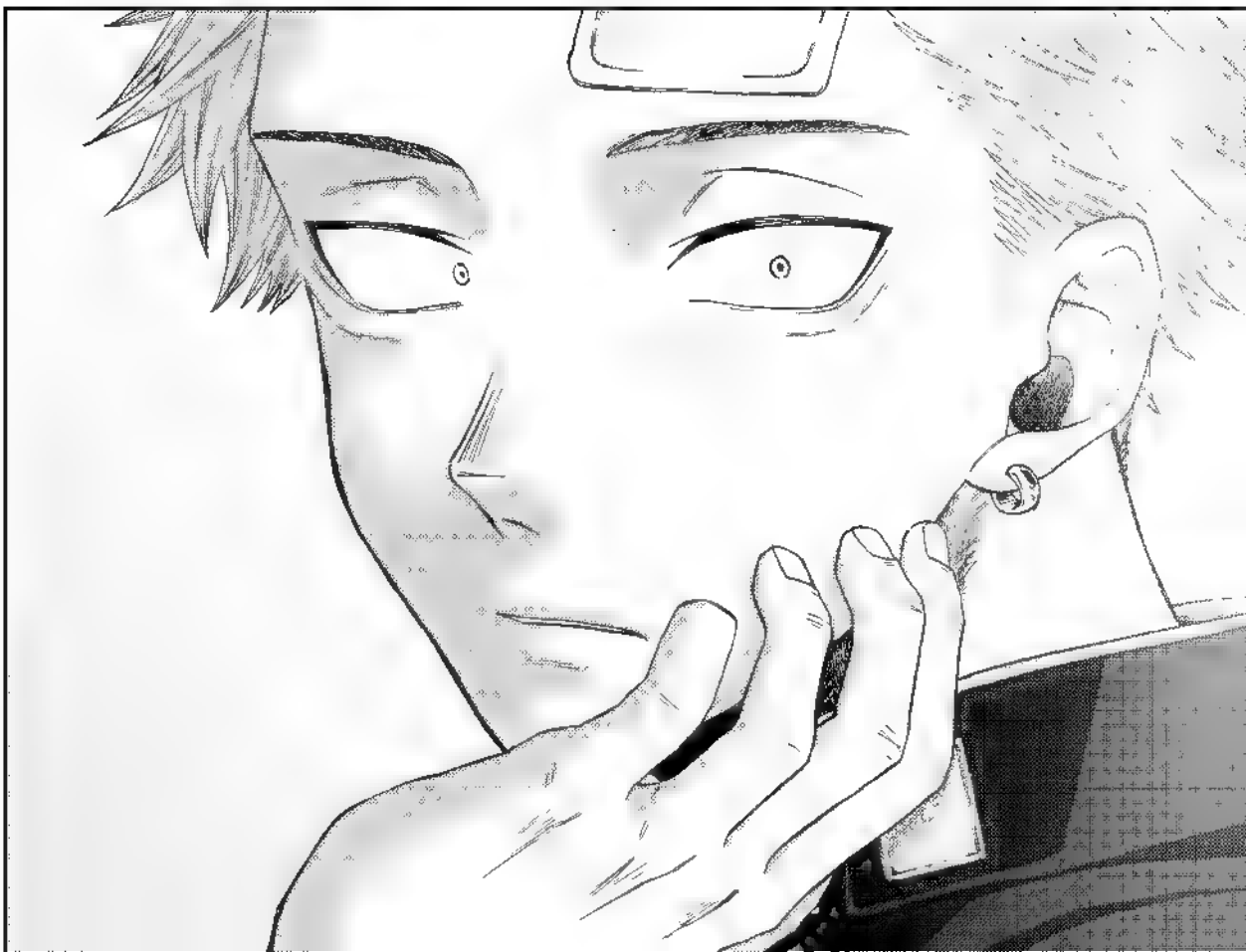
GOD, MY EYES... I DIDN'T GET MUCH SLEEP LAST NIGHT.
I ARRIVED BEFORE EVERYONE ELSE.
ぼ～ん
LOUNGE




THANK YOU.

...

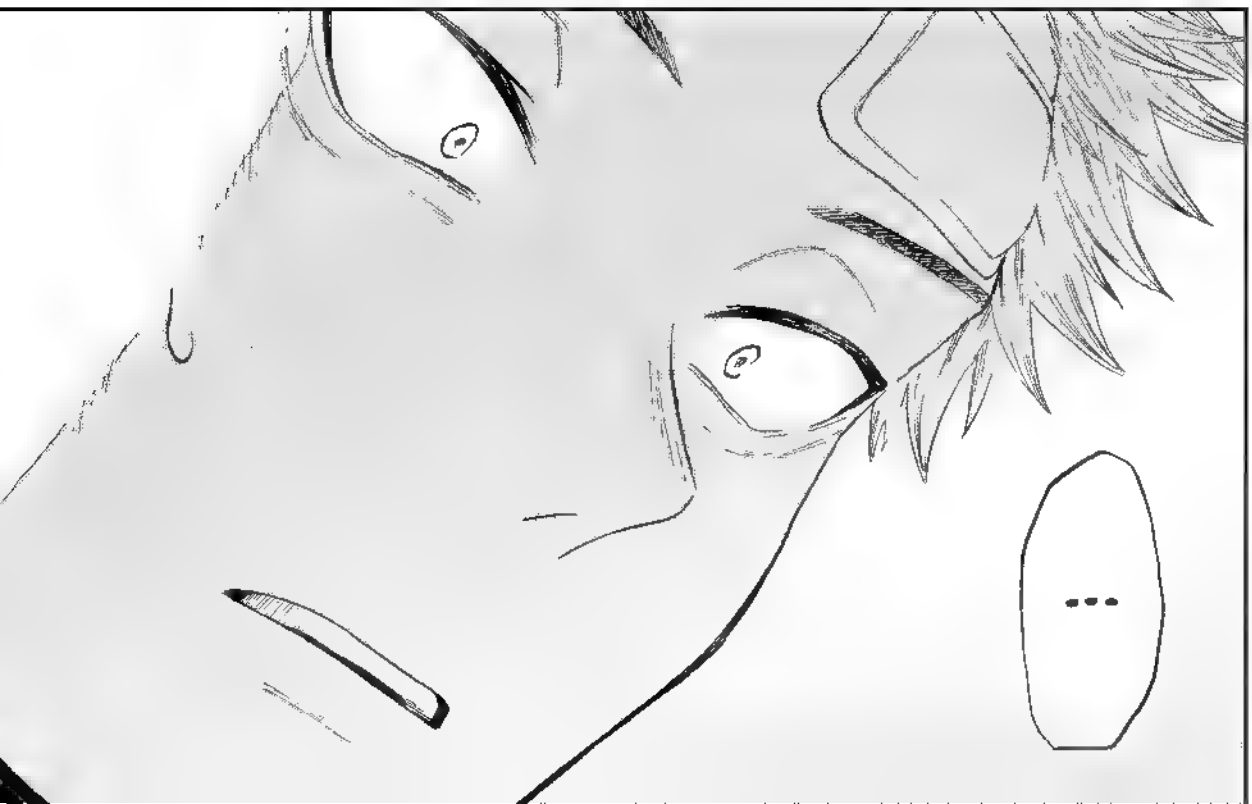
...CURTAINS CLOSED LIKE ALWAYS, HUH?
...WHEN SHE'S GONNA STOP BY NEXT?
I WONDER ...
ARE THEY GONNA OPEN THE CURTAINS?
OH, AM I DREAMING?
...WATCH ...
NOTHING ELSE TO DO, MIGHT AS WELL...



WASN'T SHE YOUNGER THAN ME...?!

WHY IS SHE THERE?

WHY?



WAGURI-SAN'S...
...A STUDENT AT KIKYO?

ARE YOU SERIOUS?

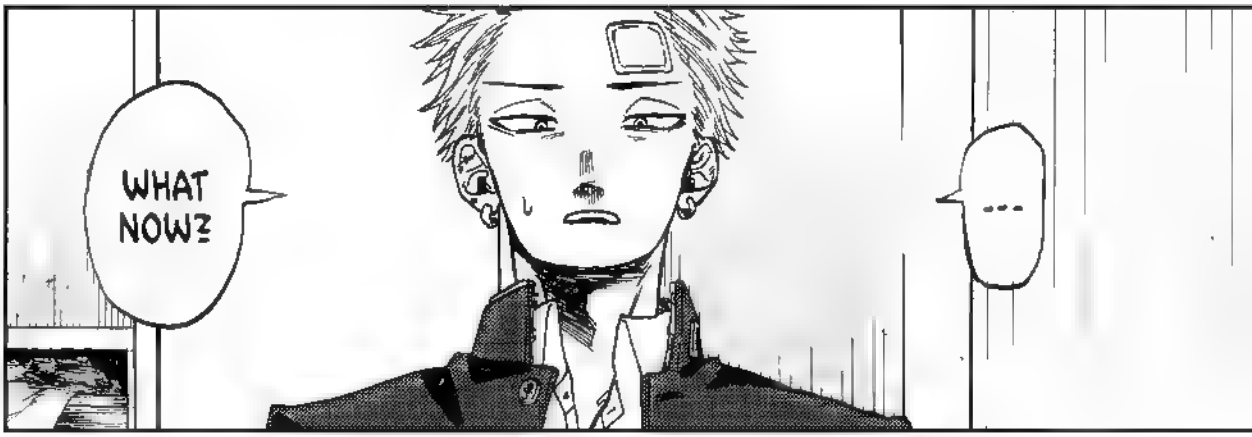
I NEVER WOULD HAVE EXPECTED ...
...SOMEONE SO UPFRONT AND UNWAVERING TO EXIST.

SHE WAS JUST SUPPOSED TO BE A CUSTOMER AT OUR PATISSERIE...
SHE SAID THAT I'M NOT SCARY. RIGHT TO MY FACE.

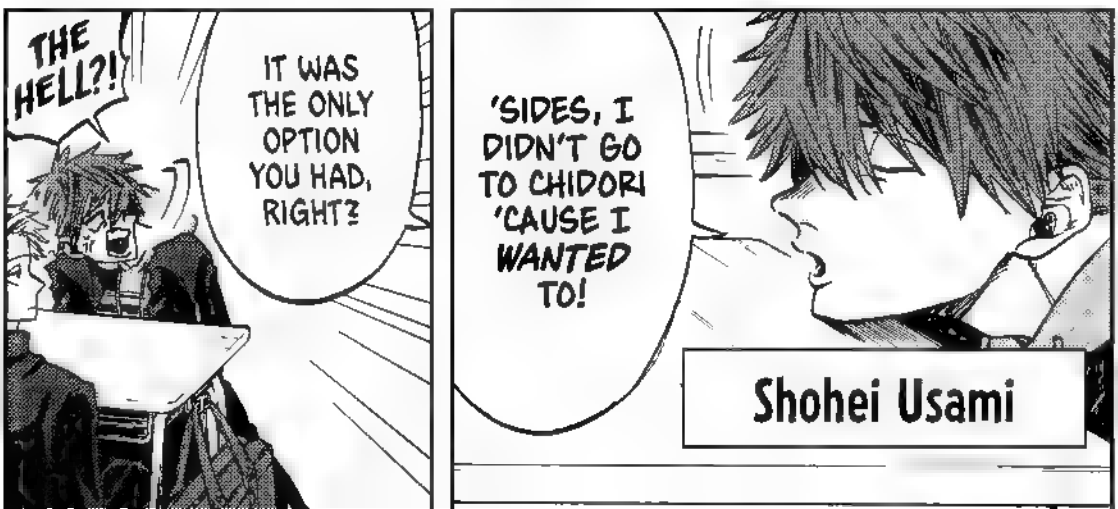
...BUT...
...OF ALL THINGS...
...WAGURI-SAN TURNED OUT TO BE...
...A STUDENT AT KIKYO.

Chapter 2: Chidori and Kikyo

I'M NOT GONNA PUT UP WITH THIS B.S. ANY LONGER.
UGGH-HHHH...


WHAT NOW?
...

BUT... EVEN I'VE GOT A LIMIT, Y'KNOW!
AS IF!
AND THAT'S SURPRISING?
KIKYO, DUDE!
THEY GAVE ME A DEATH STARE AGAIN JUST NOW!


THE HELL?!
IT WAS THE ONLY OPTION YOU HAD, RIGHT?
'SIDES, I DIDN'T GO TO CHIDORI 'CAUSE I WANTED TO!
Shohei Usami

SO EVEN MR. POPULAR SAKU'S GETTING SHUNNED? IT'S HOPE-LESS...
YOU TALKING ABOUT KIKYO? WE GOT THE SAME TREATMENT JUST NOW.
KIKYO? NO THANKS.

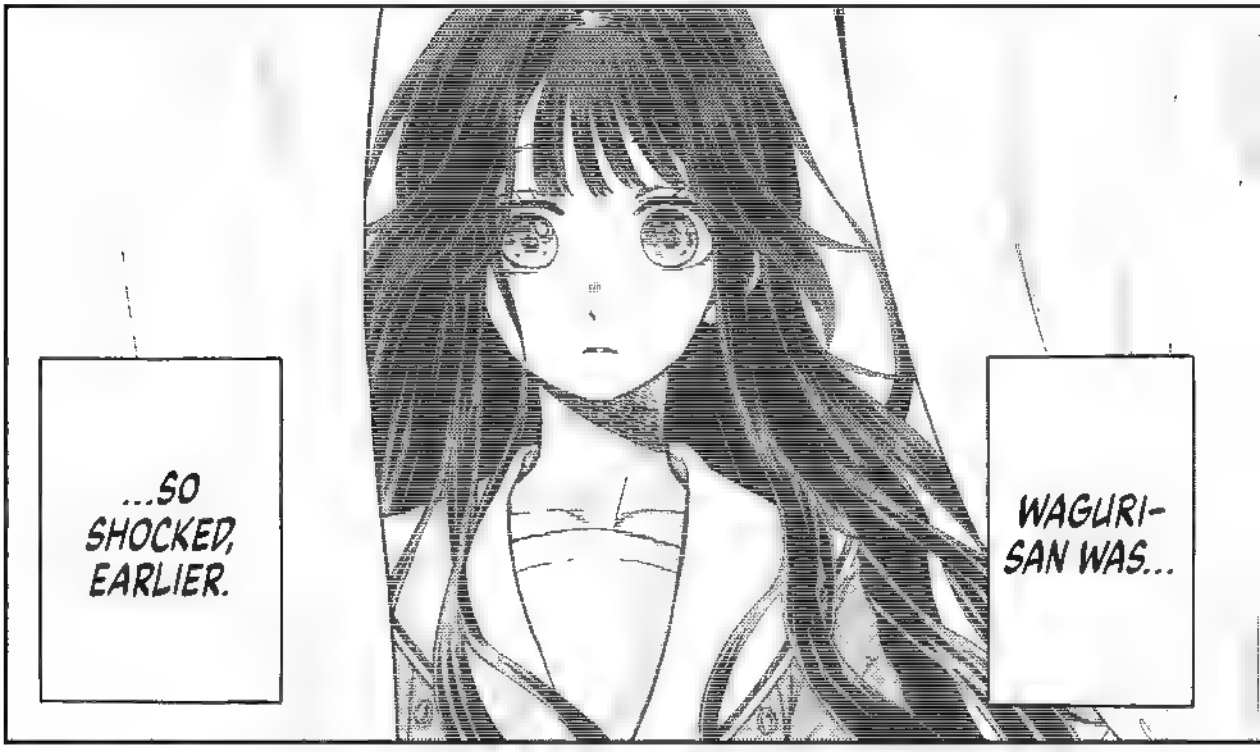
MORNING!
WHERE DOES ALL YOUR ENERGY COME FROM?
WHAT'S YOUR DEAL, SAKU?
Ayato Yorita
Saku Natsusawa

IN A WAY ...
...IT'S TO BE EXPECTED THAT WE'D CONSTANTLY CLASH LIKE THIS.

THINK ABOUT IT. YOU'VE GOT THE NOBLE LADIES FROM KIKYO...
...AND THE MORONS FROM CHIDORI.

CLOSE. IT'S, "WE MIX AS WELL AS OIL AND WATER."
OH, I KNOW! LIKE ADDING OIL TO FIRE!

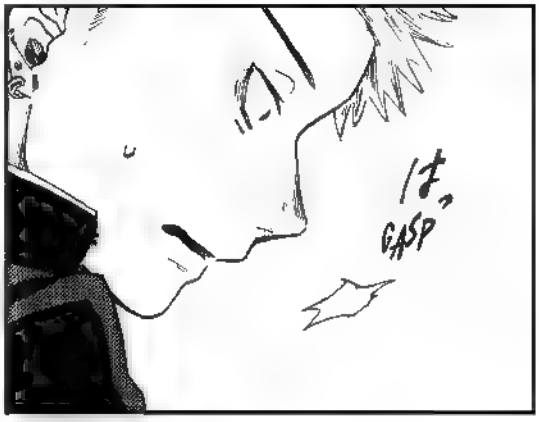
HOW DID HE EVEN MANAGE THAT?
HE HIT HIS HEAD OR SOME-THING.
ALSO, WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR FOREHEAD, RINTARO? THAT ONE'S NEW, RIGHT?

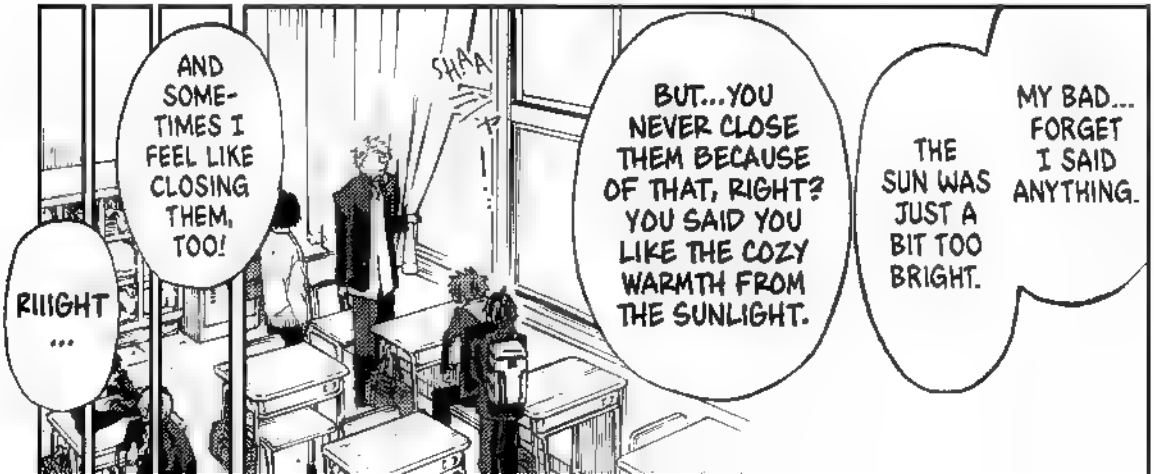

...SO SHOCKED, EARLIER.
WAGURI-SAN WAS...

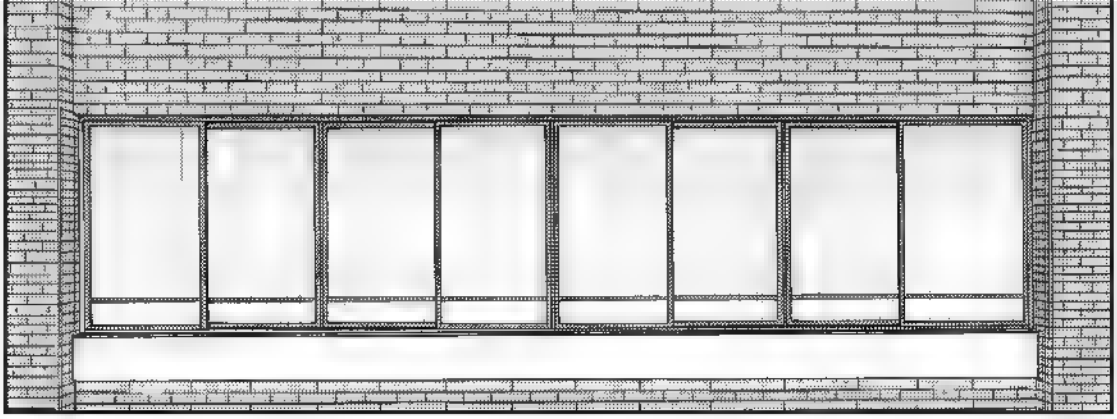
OH, SO THEY ARE. THAT'S RARE.
UH? YEAH.
CRAP, I LEFT THEM AS IS.
DID YOU CLOSE THOSE CURTAINS, RINTARO?
OH, YEAH!
BUT IT MUST HAVE LOOKED BAD TO HER, RIGHT?
I WOULDN'T BE SURPRISED IF SHE STARTS HATING ME NOW.
I JUST PANICKED AND CLOSED THE CURTAINS WITHOUT THINKING...

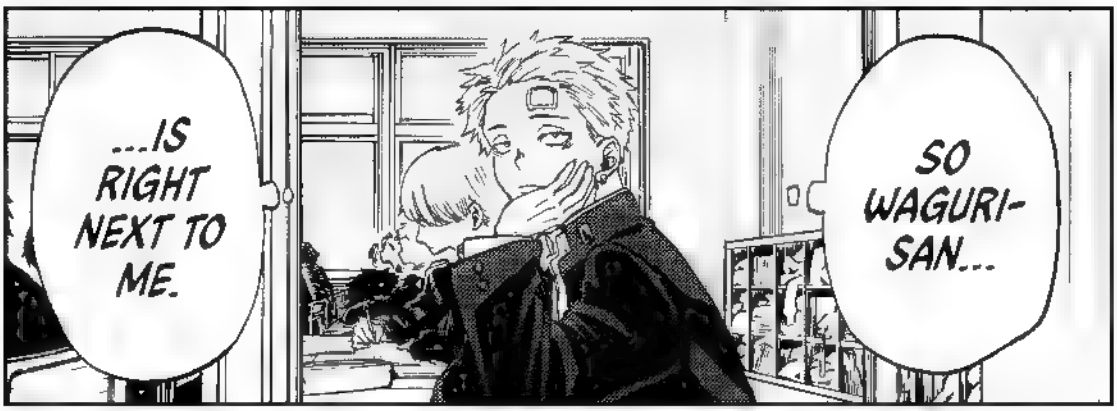
WHAM
I MEAN, NOT LIKE LOOKING AT KIKYO'S BUILDING'S GONNA CHEER YOU UP, HUH?
DEFI-
NITELY
NOT!
DE...

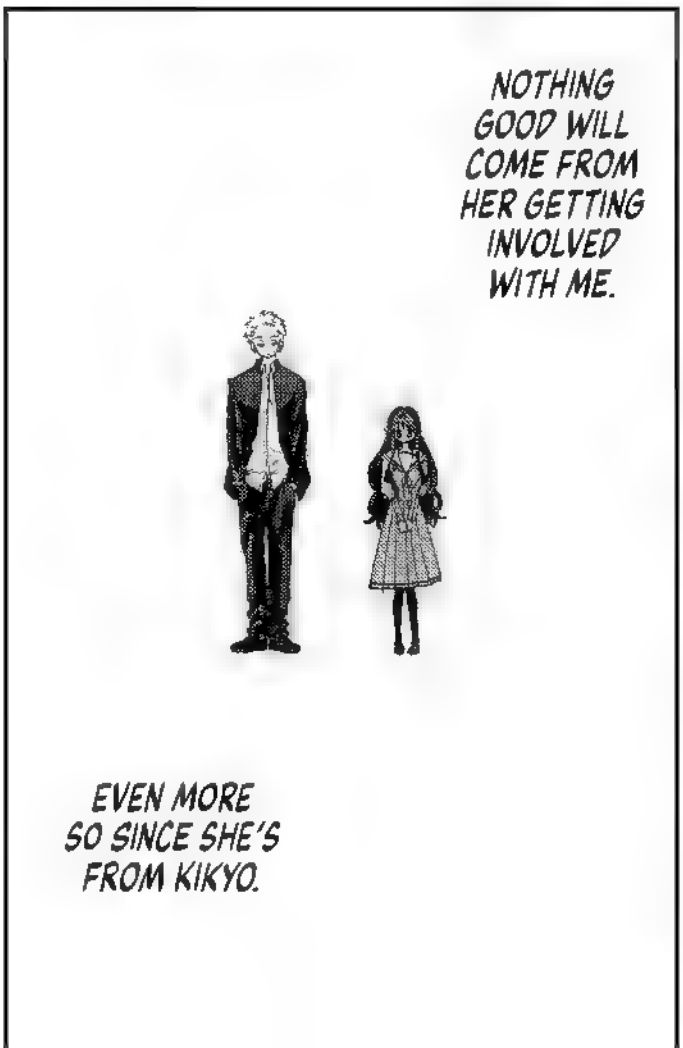
DAZED
WHAT'S GOT YOU SO RILED UP?
HUH?

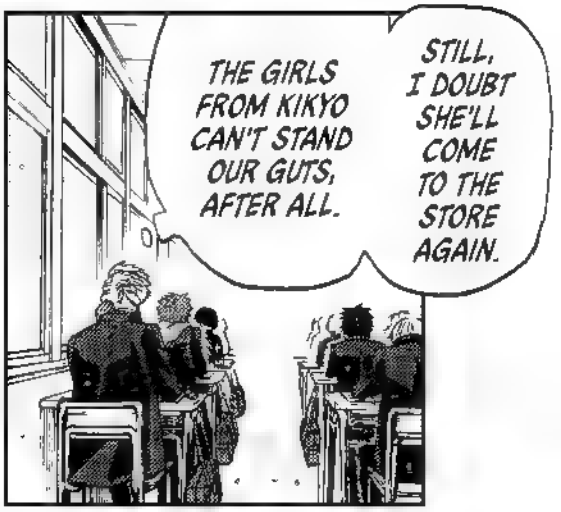

GASP


SHAA
AND SOMETIMES I FEEL LIKE CLOSING THEM, TOO!
RIIIGHT...
BUT...YOU NEVER CLOSE THEM BECAUSE OF THAT, RIGHT? YOU SAID YOU LIKE THE COZY WARMTH FROM THE SUNLIGHT.
THE SUN WAS JUST A BIT TOO BRIGHT.
MY BAD... FORGET I SAID ANYTHING.




...IS RIGHT NEXT TO ME.
SO WAGURI-SAN...

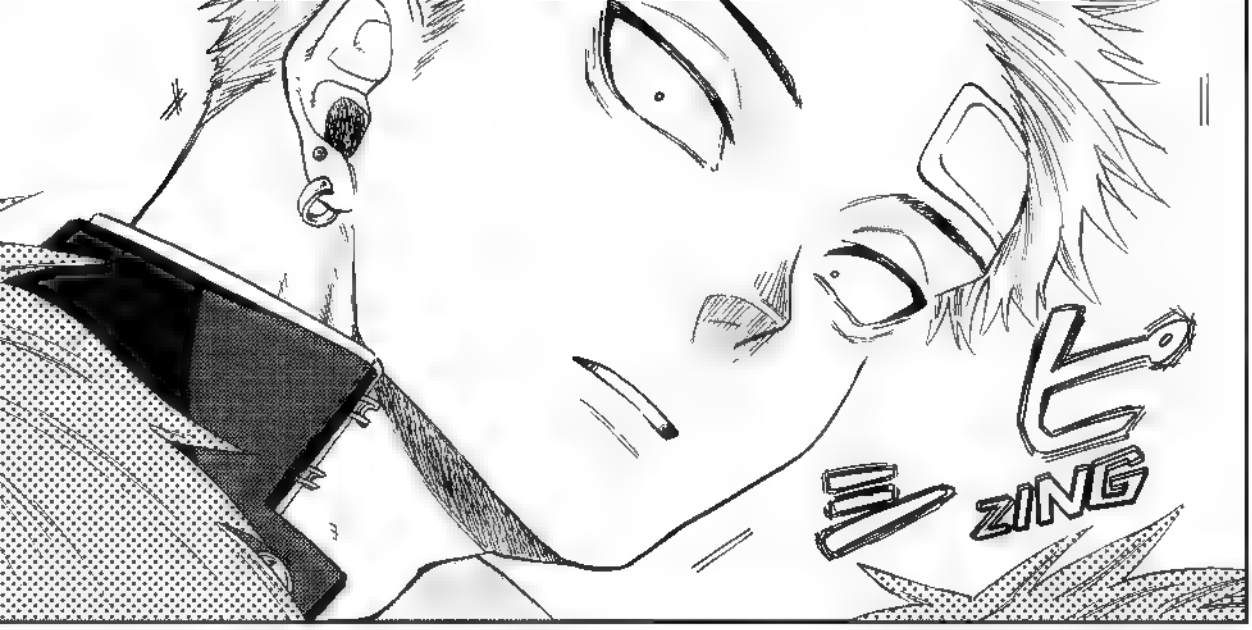

NOTHING GOOD WILL COME FROM HER GETTING INVOLVED WITH ME.
EVEN MORE SO SINCE SHE'S FROM KIKYO.


THE GIRLS FROM KIKYO CAN'T STAND OUR GUTS, AFTER ALL.
STILL, I DOUBT SHE'LL COME TO THE STORE AGAIN.

WELL, MAYBE THIS IS FOR THE BEST.
...

Chats
SILENCE
Mom
NO REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE FROM MOM, AT LEAST.
LET ME CHECK...
ONCE IN A WHILE, YEAH.
SAY WHAT? YOU'RE IN FOR ONCE?
YEAH. WHERE SHOULD WE GO?
THIS...
YO! SHOULD WE HANG OUT SOMEWHERE TODAY?
TURN
THIS IS THE BEST END, I GUESS.
IS IT JUST ME...
THEN LET'S EAT THOSE TODAY!
I GOT A COUPON FOR SOME FREE FRIES LAST TIME!
I'M GONNA SING MY HEART OUT SINCE I COULDN'T JOIN LAST TIME.
...IS HOW IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE.
OH, THAT, WELL...
DANG!
HE'S HUGE!
PEEK
YIKES!
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
CHATTER
CHATTER
...OR IS THERE SOMETHING GOING ON AT THE GATE?

THERE'S A GIRL WAITING THERE...


ZING

WA...

HEY, HEY, HEY!
BUMP
BUMP
BUMP
WHAT IS SHE DOING?!
WHY IS SHE STANDING THERE?!

NO WAY, NO WAY!
SOMEONE GO TALK TO HER ALREADY...
WHY'S A GIRL FROM KIKYO HERE?
MURMUR
MURMUR
WAGURI-SAN?!

YOU DAMN MORON!
FLINCH
EEEK!
WHAT'S A KIKYO GIRL DOING HERE AT CHIDORI, HUNH?!

OH!
ERK... RINTARO ...
STOP SCARING HER, USAMI.

I WAS WAITING FOR SOMEONE.
UM...
WHUH ?!
THAT IDIOT... HE'S LASHING OUT AT HER JUST BECAUSE SHE'S FROM KIKYO...

AND WHO EXACTLY ARE YOU WAITING FOOOO...
TUG

IT'S... IT'S OKAY.
!

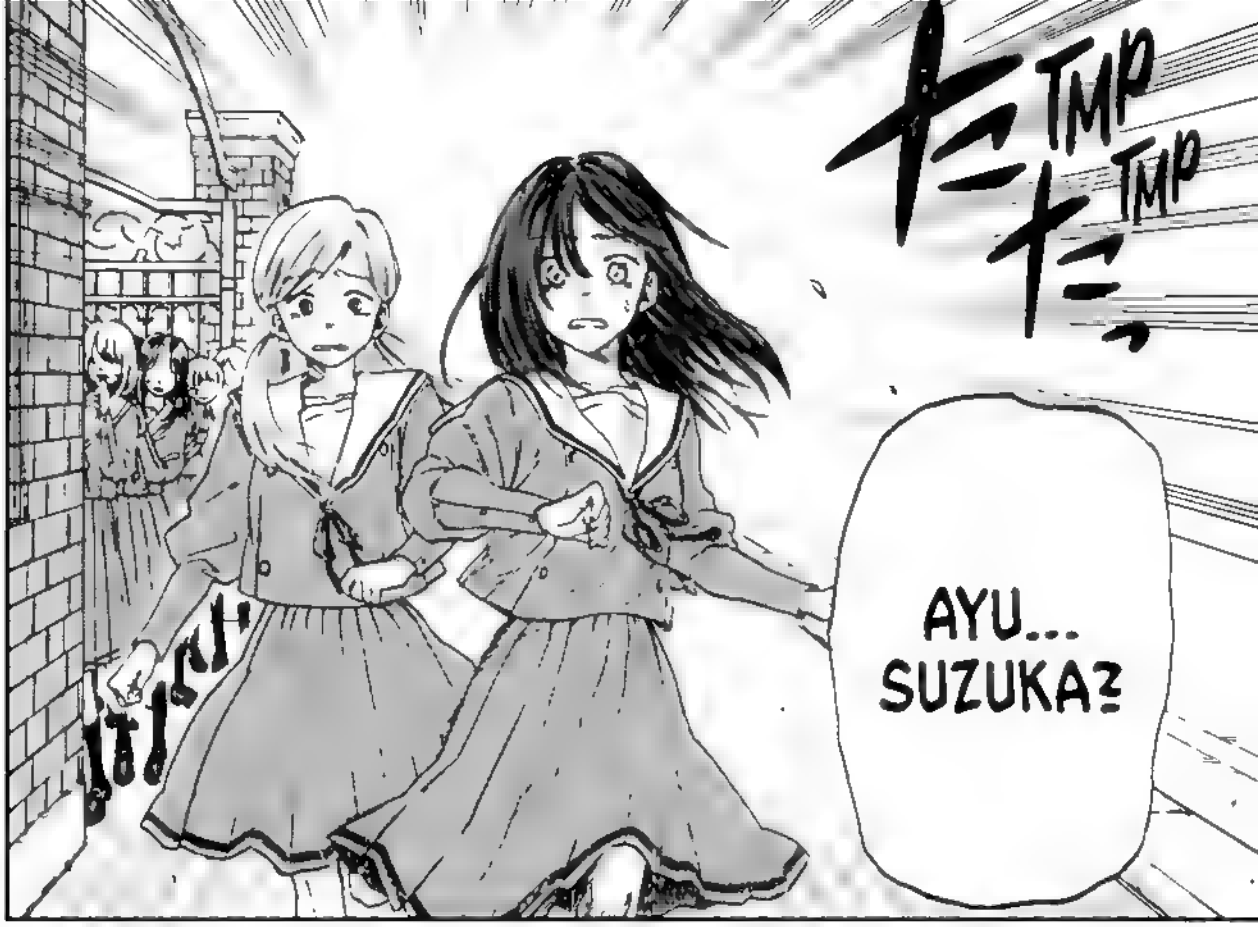
...
SORRY IF HE SCARED YOU.

BLUB
I'M SO FRIGGIN' JEAL-OUS!

CRAP, DID I GET FOUND OUT?!
SHE'S WAITING FOR SOME-ONE?
A GUY FROM CHIDORI IS FRIENDS WITH A KIKYO GIRL?
THE HELL?

!
KAO-RUKO?! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

Waaah!
I'M GLAD HE'S AN IDIOT.
MAN, I WANT A GIRL-FRIEND, TOO!!
I'D RATHER GO TO HELL THAN DATE SOMEONE FROM KIKYO, BUT HAVING YOUR GIRL-FRIEND WAIT FOR YOU AT THE FRONT GATE...
Dammit!


TMP
TMP
AYU... SUZUKA?

FWAM
BUT...
NO BUTS!
YOU SHOULDN'T BE HERE! HURRY BACK WITH US!
GAH!

LET'S HURRY ON BACK!
THANKFULLY, HOSHINA-SAN ISN'T AROUND TO SEE THIS!
NOW THERE'S AN AUDIENCE
I THINK THEY'RE INSULTING US AGAIN.
OH, KIKYO'S HERE, TOO.
AT THIS RATE, SHE MIGHT CATCH CHIDORI STUPIDITY.
WHAT WOULD SHE BE DOING OVER AT CHIDORI?
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT...
WATTER
WATTER
WATTER

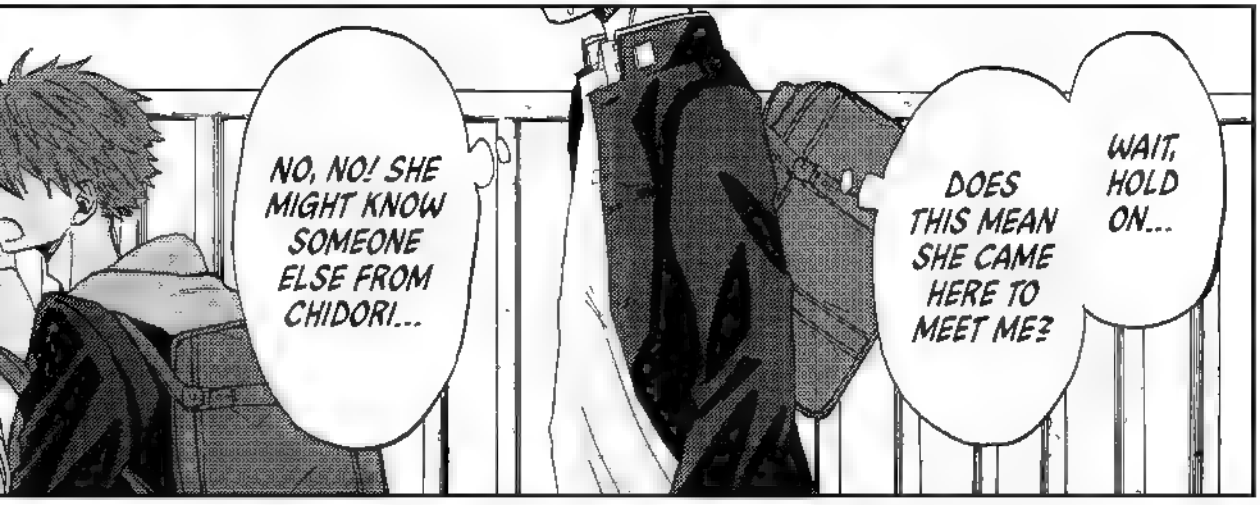
SLAP
HEY! CAN'T YOU AT LEAST APOLOGIZE?!
EEEK?!

HEY!!
AH...
YANK
LET'S GO, KAORUKO.

I'LL REMEMBER THIS, DANGIT!

LIKE I CARE!
I WONDER WHAT THAT GIRL WANTED HERE...
WELL, YOU DID JUST BARGE IN WITHOUT THINKING.
I'M ALSO A VICTIM HERE!
WHAT THE HELL'S THEIR PROBLEM?
That was crazy...
Cheer up, Usami!

SIGH
AA-AAA-AH!
I ALMOST HAD A HEART ATTACK!
I PRETENDED NOT TO KNOW HER... THEY DIDN'T FIGURE IT OUT... RIGHT?
LET'S GO, RINTARO!
THIS IS WHY I CAN'T STAND THOSE LITTLE PRINCESSES!
Y-YEAH.


NO, NO! SHE MIGHT KNOW SOMEONE ELSE FROM CHIDORI...
DOES THIS MEAN SHE CAME HERE TO MEET ME?
WAIT, HOLD ON...

IT'S... EVEN MORE TERRIFYING THAN USUAL.
OH, TRUE. NEVER SEEN THAT KINDA EXPRESSION ON YOU.
WHUH?!
WHAT THE... RINTARO, YOUR FACE!
IT'S HELLA WEIRD! WHAT HAP-PENED?!
?!
SH-SHUT UP!
BUT...IF THAT'S THE CASE, THEN...

BUT... I FEEL HAPPY?
I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON...
WHAT ...IS THIS?
IT'S OBVIOUS THAT WE SHOULDN'T MEET UP ANYMORE.
IN THE END, I STILL SCARED HER AWAY!
SHAKE
NO, NO! WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME?
SHAKE

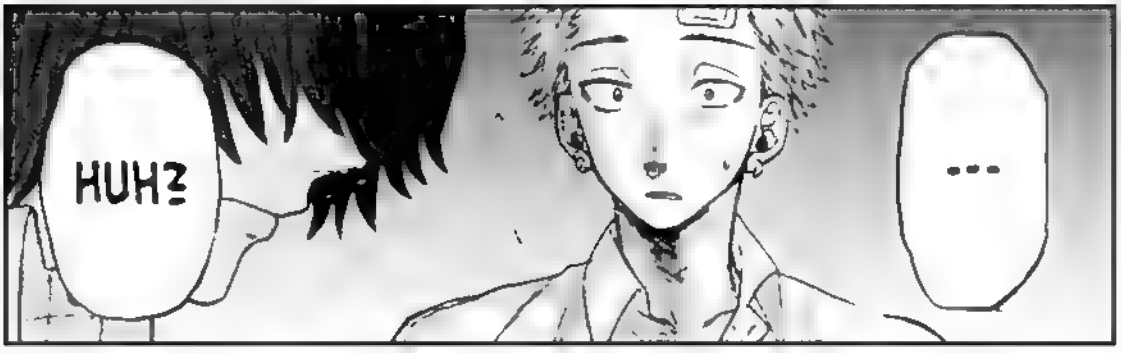
YOU PUT YOUR SONG IN YET, RINTARO?
NOT YET
MY BAD I'LL DO IT NOW
NO PROB

...

SAY, RINTARO
BUT YOU DID WELL!
DANGIT, I CAN'T EVEN GET 90 POINTS!

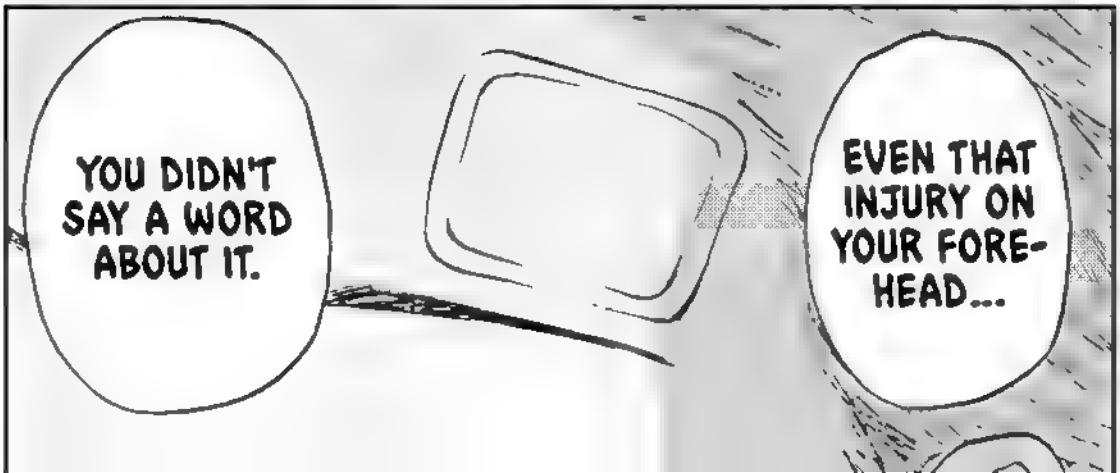
I CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED EARLIER...
UGH. DANGIT

...HAPPEN RECENTLY?
DID SOME-THING ...


HUH?
...

IF SOME-THING'S ON YOUR MIND, YOU CAN TALK TO US.

I AGREE HE'S BEEN A BIT OUT OF IT LATELY.
I MEAN ...
WAIT, FOR REAL?!


YOU DIDN'T SAY A WORD ABOUT IT.
EVEN THAT INJURY ON YOUR FORE-HEAD...

IF I DID TELL THEM, THEY'D PROBABLY SAY...

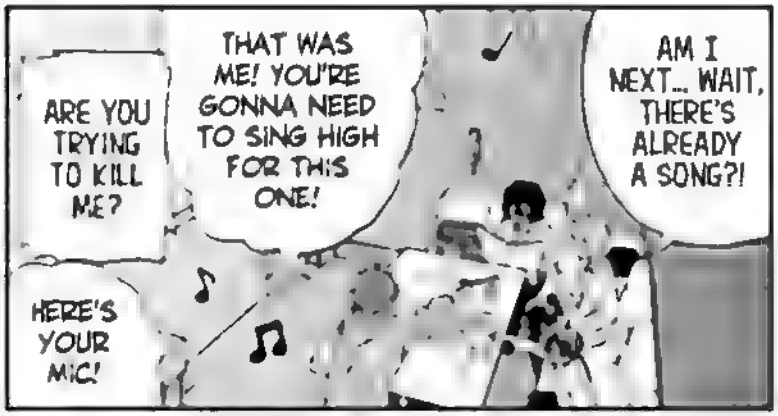
SOME-
HOW...
NO,
THAT'S
NOT IT.
I CAN'T
BLAME THEM
FOR FEELING
THAT WAY.
BUT
SHE'S
FROM
KIKYO.

...DON'T WANT
TO HEAR THEM
SAY THAT.
I JUST...
I'M
FINE.
NAH, IT'S
NOTHING.

'ZAT
SO.
...

WELP,
WE'RE
ALWAYS
HERE
IF YOU
WANNA
TALK
ABOUT
STUFF.
...GOT-
CHA.

YEAH?
AND, NATSU-SAWA?

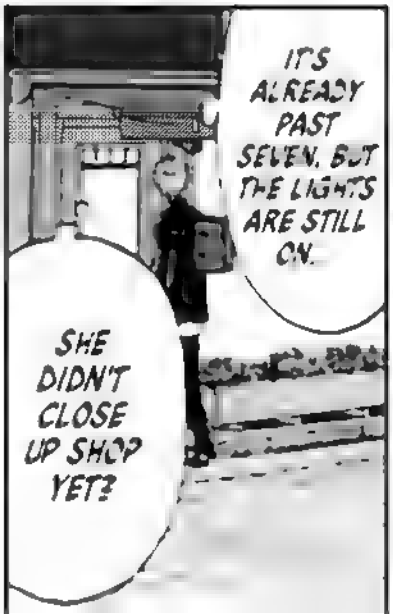

ARE YOU TRYING TO KILL ME?
THAT WAS ME! YOU'RE GONNA NEED TO SING HIGH FOR THIS ONE!
AM I NEXT... WAIT, THERE'S ALREADY A SONG?!
HERE'S YOUR MIC!

THIS IS WHAT I MEAN, RINTARO.

I'LL JOIN IN. HAND ME A MIC.
SAKU'S GONNA SING?! HELL YEAH!
HUH?

SORRY FOR MAKING YA WORRY 'BOUT ME.

KA-CHAK
I'M BACK! MOM, THE FRONT DOOR WAS OPEN, SO...
OH!


IT'S ALREADY PAST SEVEN, BUT THE LIGHTS ARE STILL ON.
SHE DIDN'T CLOSE UP SHOP YET?

HM?

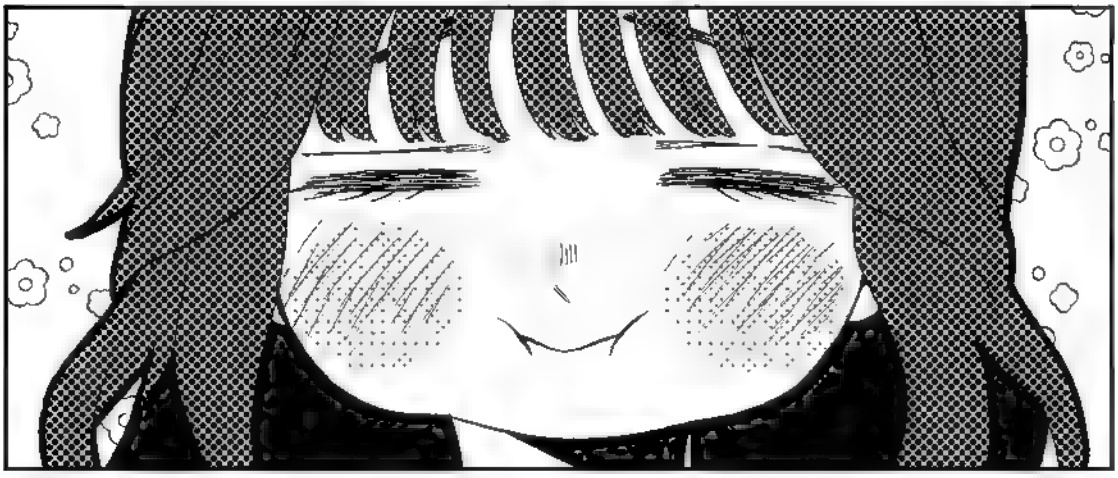
RINTARO-
KUN!

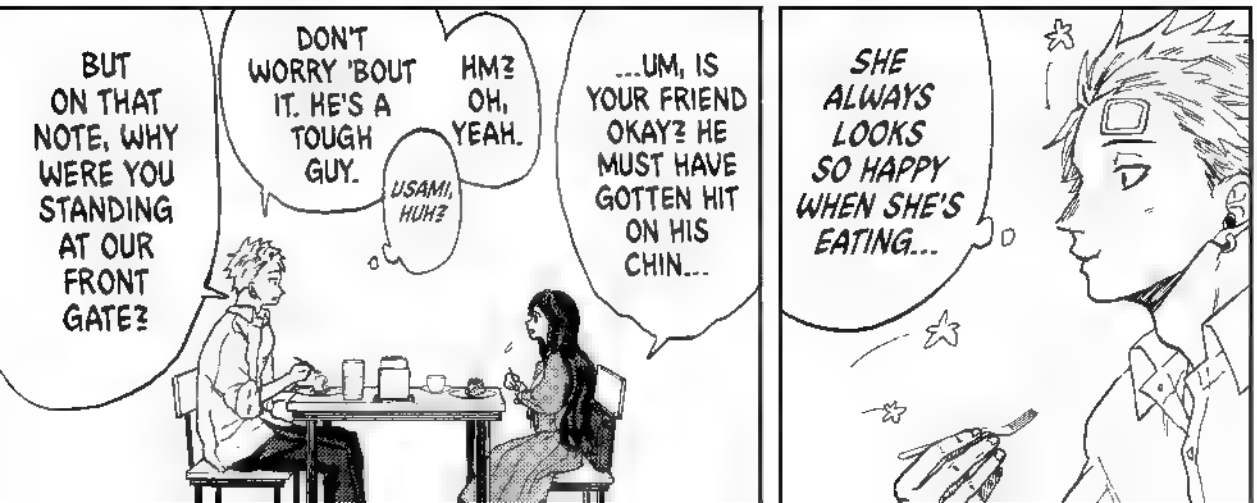
WELCOME
BACK...!

TEP
TEP
WAGURI-SAN?! WHY ARE YOU...?
I CAUSED SUCH A RUCKUS...
ALL BECAUSE I UNDER-ESTIMATED THE BAD BLOOD BETWEEN CHIDORI AND KIKYO.
HUH?!
FWAP
I'M TERRIBLY SORRY!
TOOK YOU LONG ENOUGH, GEEZ!
WHAT? I'M NOT BOTHERED BY THAT...
PLEASE, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.

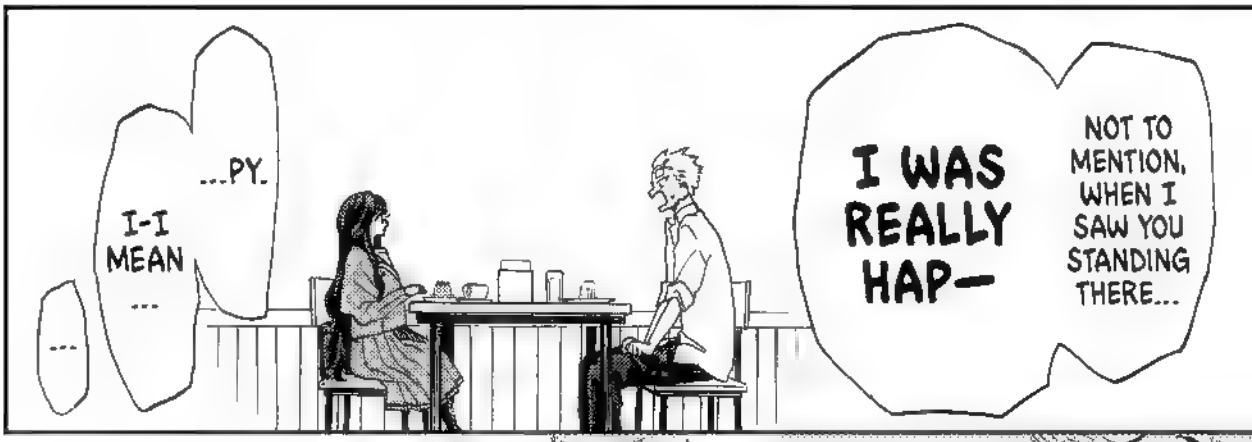
GRUMBLE
THANK YOU, BUT I'VE ALREADY ...
WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE SOME OF OUR LEFTOVER CAKE?
WAGURI-SAN! IF YOU'VE STILL GOT SOME TIME...
TMP TMP
WELCOME HOME! WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY YOU'D BE OUT LATE?!
SHE'S BEEN WAITING HERE THIS ENTIRE TIME!
M-MY BAD...
Ahahaha!!
NOT YOU TOO, RIN-TARO-KUN!
... PFFT
I'M SORRY! THAT WAS SO UNSIGHTLY OF ME...
カ
BLUUSH
IT'S NOT THAT FUNNY, TSUMUGI-SAN!
HA HA HA HA HA!
HEY, WAGURI-SAN?

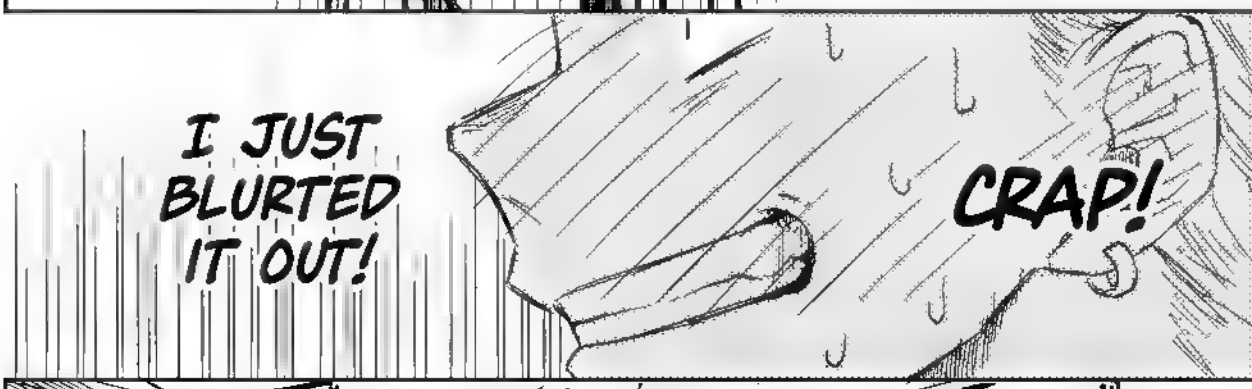
HOW ABOUT WE EAT SOME CAKE?
TOGETH-ER.
!
...YES, PLEASE.




BUT ON THAT NOTE, WHY WERE YOU STANDING AT OUR FRONT GATE?
DON'T WORRY 'BOUT IT. HE'S A TOUGH GUY.
USAMI, HUH?
HM? OH, YEAH.
...UM, IS YOUR FRIEND OKAY? HE MUST HAVE GOTTEN HIT ON HIS CHIN...
SHE ALWAYS LOOKS SO HAPPY WHEN SHE'S EATING...

SO SHE WAS THERE BECAUSE OF ME, AFTER ALL?!
DON'T BE! OUR GUYS INSTIGATED IT!
I WON'T BE SO CARELESS AGAIN... SORRY.
...WANTED TO SEE YOU.
WELL, I ACTUALLY ...


...
I-I MEAN ...
...PY.
I WAS REALLY HAP—
NOT TO MENTION, WHEN I SAW YOU STANDING THERE...


I JUST BLURTED IT OUT!
CRAP!

NO WAY!
FORGET I SAID ANYTHING!
BOOF
AAAAA-AAAH!!
NOT AT ALL.
THAT WAS KINDA CREEPY, RIGHT?
ACTUALLY, LEMME APOLOGIZE!

DON'T TAKE IT BACK!

GASP
は。
!

...!
Gulp

BECAUSE I CAME WITHOUT SAYING ANYTHING?
I DIDN'T EXPECT YOU TO COME VISIT AGAIN TODAY!
Y'KNOW ...
HUH? OH, YES! LET'S!
...MAYBE WE SHOULD START EATING!
NO.

I THOUGHT YOU'D STOP COMING OVER.

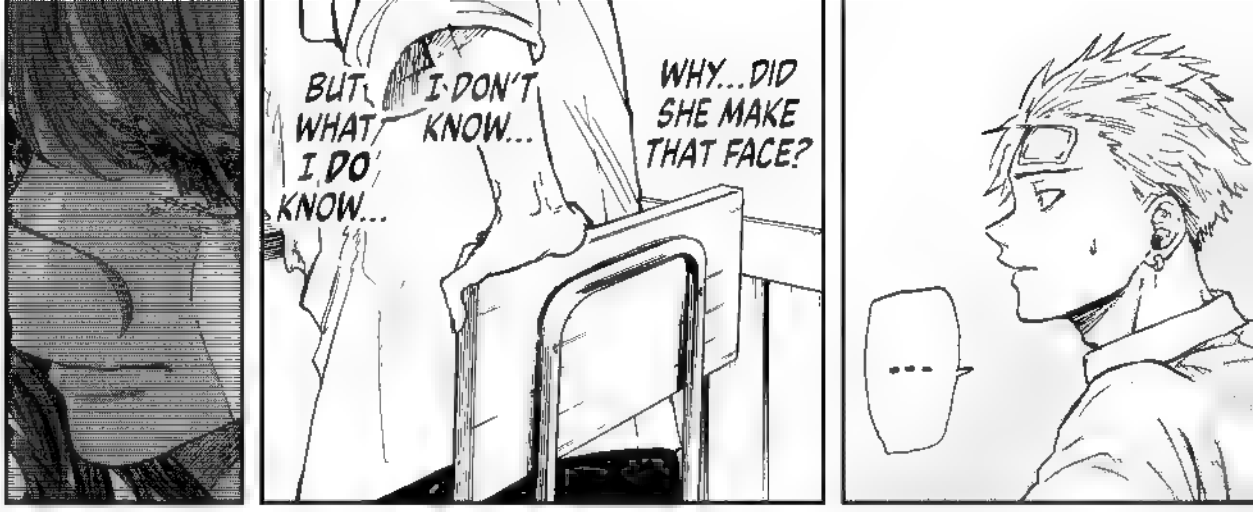
...WHY?
I MEAN ...
WE'RE FROM CHIDORI AND KIKYO, RIGHT?
WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO HER?

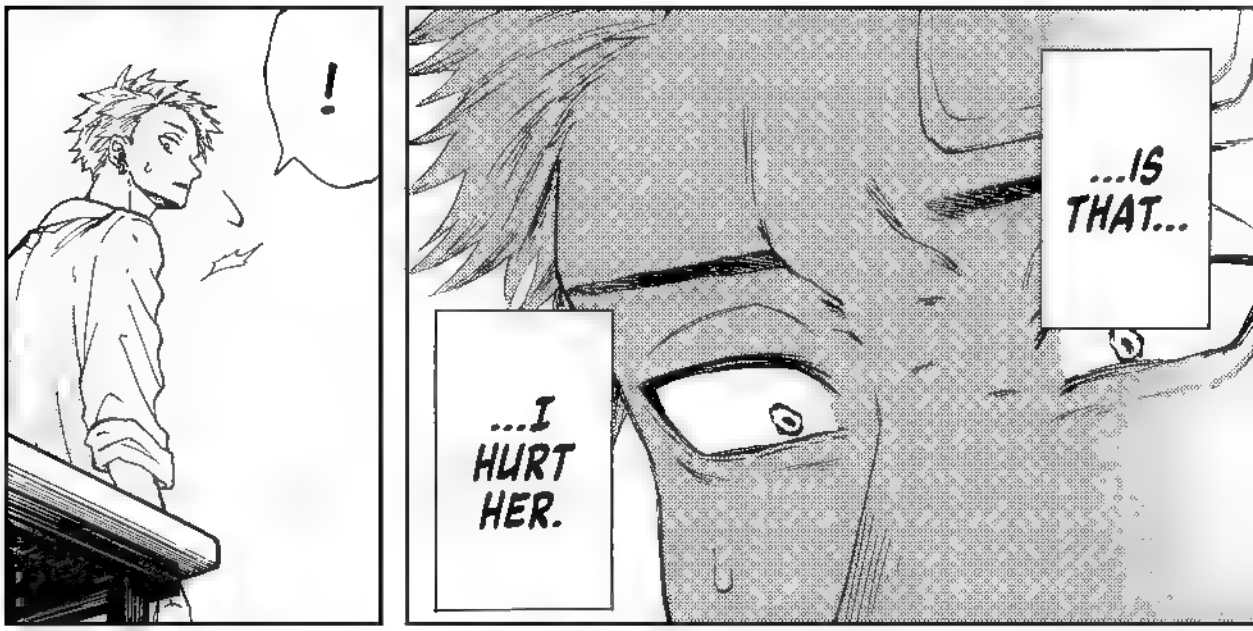
SINCE YOU'RE AT KIKYO...
I DIDN'T THINK YOU'D ACTUALLY COME TO SEE ME, EITHER.

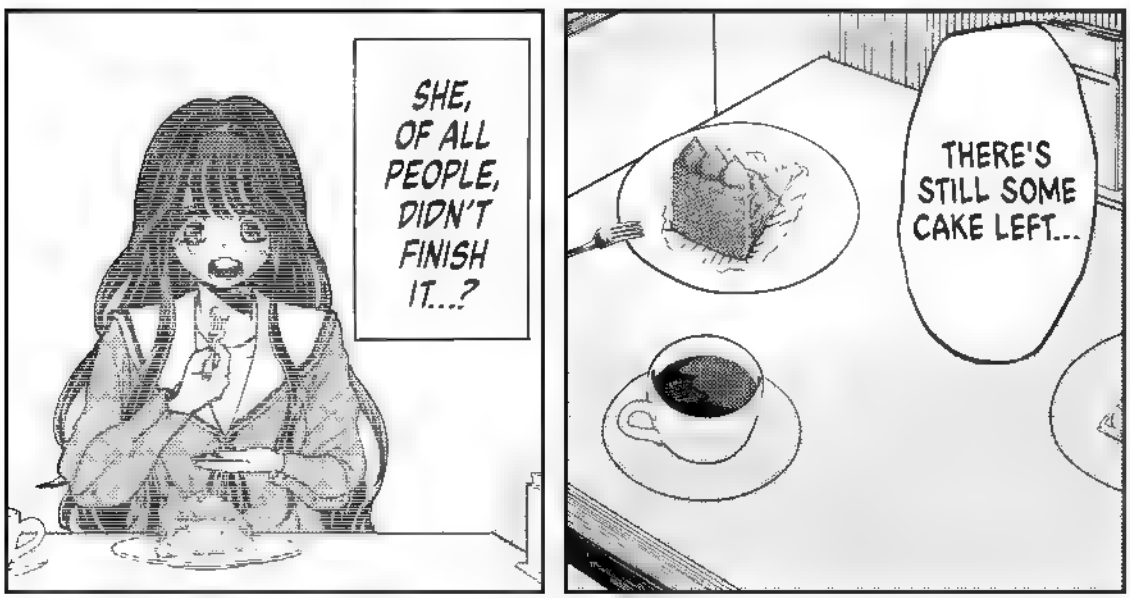
...IF YOU ASSOCIATE WITH ME.
IT WON'T TURN OUT WELL FOR YOU...
...
BUT I...

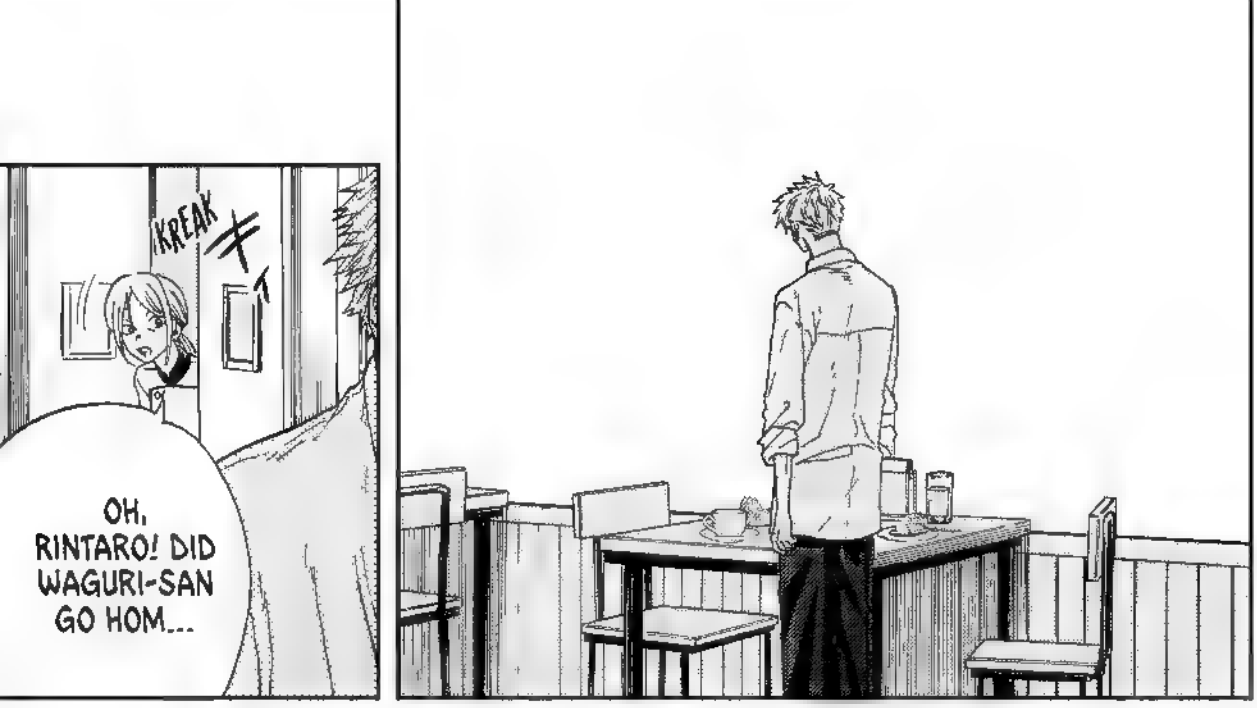
...WAS HAPPY.
TO LEARN THAT YOU'RE FROM CHIDORI.
...WHAT?
I THINK I SHOULD HEAD HOME NOW.
...OH!
IT'S GOTTEN THIS LATE ALREADY!
...
IT'S THE TRUTH.
HALT
WA-WAGURI-SAN!

...
THE CAKE...
WAS DELICIOUS. THANK YOU VERY MUCH!
...TO GET TO KNOW YOU BETTER, RINTARO-KUN.
I THOUGHT IT WOULD ALLOW ME...


BUT WHAT I DO KNOW...
I DON'T KNOW...
WHY...DID SHE MAKE THAT FACE?
...


!
...I HURT HER.
...IS THAT...

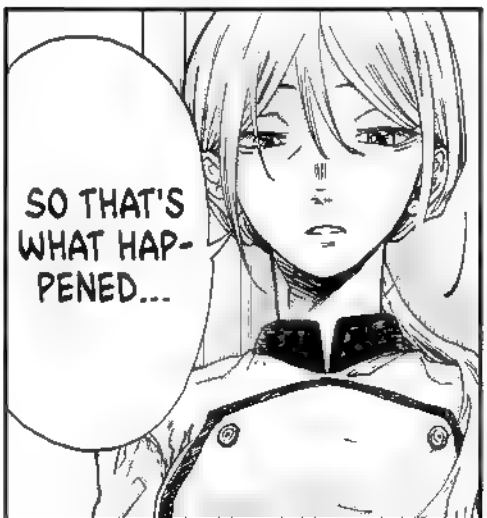

SHE, OF ALL PEOPLE, DIDN'T FINISH IT...?
THERE'S STILL SOME CAKE LEFT...


KREAK
OH, RINTARO! DID WAGURI-SAN GO HOM...

FWUP
FWUP
HEY, YOU OKAY?!
COME WITH ME! RIGHT NOW!
I DON'T REMEMBER GIVING BIRTH TO A SKELETON, YA KNOW?!

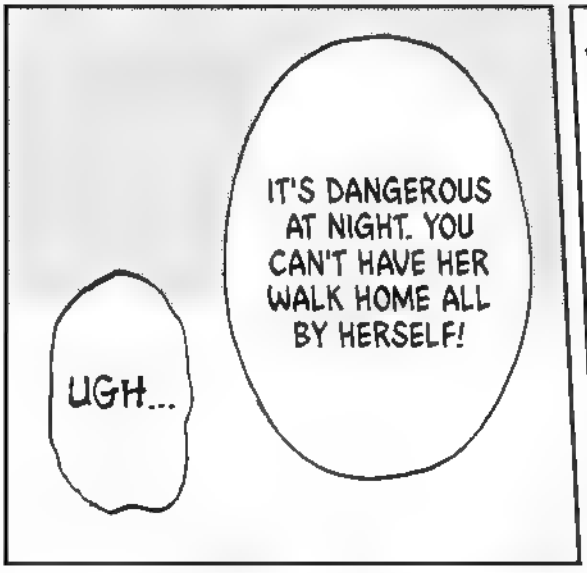
AAAA-AAAA-AAH?!
GLOOM
HUH ...?

C'MERE FOR A SEC.
?


SO THAT'S WHAT HAP-PENED...

HUH...

ACK!
SMAK

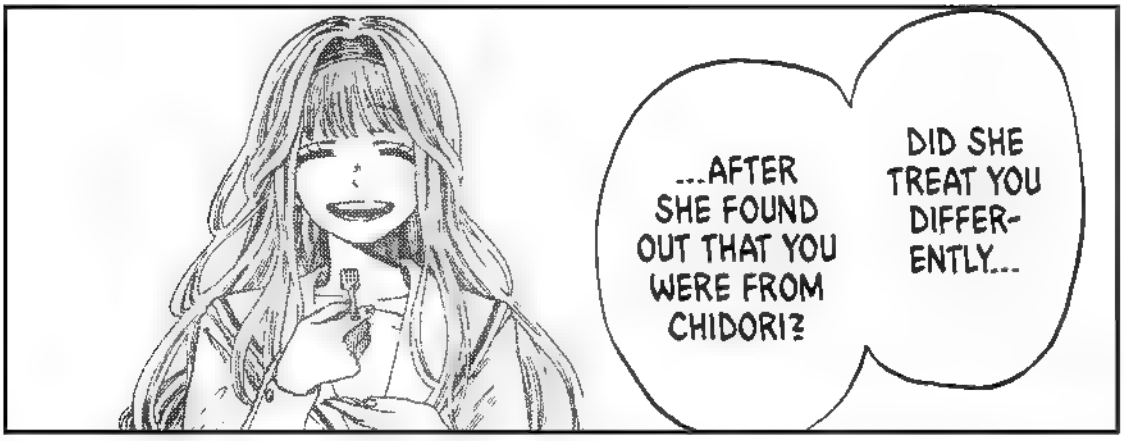

IT'S DANGEROUS AT NIGHT. YOU CAN'T HAVE HER WALK HOME ALL BY HERSELF!
UGH...

FLAP
FIRST THINGS FIRST...
THAT FRIG-GIN' HURT ...!
YOU GO AND CHASE AFTER WAGURI-SAN.
FLAP

WAGURI-SAN, SHE...

...
I REALLY DON'T GET WHAT'S GOING ON ANYMORE.
SHE SAID SHE WAS HAPPY ABOUT GETTING TO KNOW ME.
THIS DENSE SON OF MINE...
WHERE DID I GO WRONG...?
SLUMP
?
WHAT?
SAY...
HM?
WHY D'YOU THINK WAGURI-SAN CAME TO SEE ME?
...
SHE'S FROM KIKYO, YOU KNOW?
WHAT?
DO YOU REALLY NOT GET IT?
YOU'RE DOING THE EXACT SAME THING TO HER THAT PEOPLE HAVE DONE TO YOU ALL YOUR LIFE.

AND YET, RIGHT NOW, IT'S ALL KIKYO THIS, KIKYO THAT WITH YOU.
...WHO FORCED THEIR OWN PRECON-CEPTIONS ONTO YOU, RIGHT?
YOU'VE ALWAYS RESENTED OTHERS...

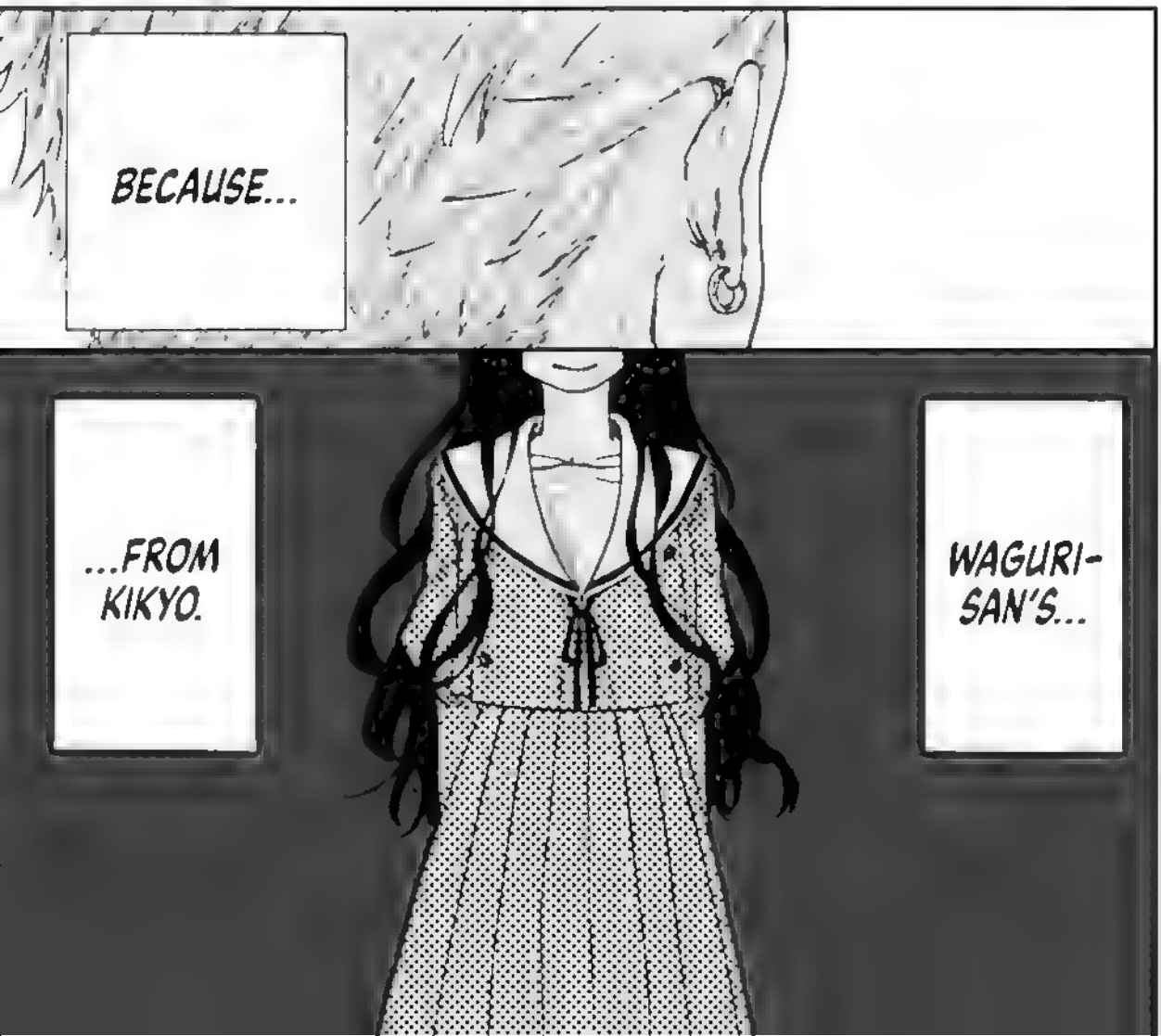

...AFTER SHE FOUND OUT THAT YOU WERE FROM CHIDORI?
DID SHE TREAT YOU DIFFER-ENTLY...

BUT YOU...
WHAT PART OF WAGURI-SAN DID YOU FOCUS ON?

...IF SHE GETS INVOLVED WITH SOMEONE FROM CHIDORI LIKE ME.
NOTHING GOOD WILL HAPPEN...

DID'JA KNOW HE'S A DELIN-QUENT?
HE'S FAMOUS FOR BEING TERRIFYING, RIGHT?

SERIOUSLY? THAT DOESN'T SUIT HIM AT ALL.
RINTARO-KUN'S FAMILY OWNS A BAKERY, YOU KNOW?


BECAUSE...
...FROM KIKYO.
WAGURI-SAN'S...

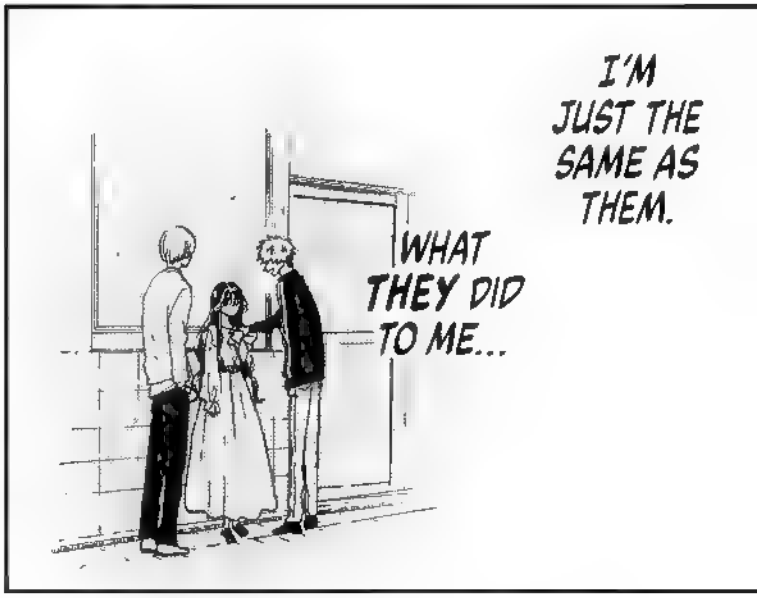
WHAM
HUUUH ?!

C'MON, SAY SOMETHING ALREADY...

CLENCH
I'M...
...THE WORST.

L-LET ME GRAB A TISSUE!
DRIP
WHAT IN THE WORLD ARE YOU DOING?!

...I DID TO WAGURI-SAN.
MOM.

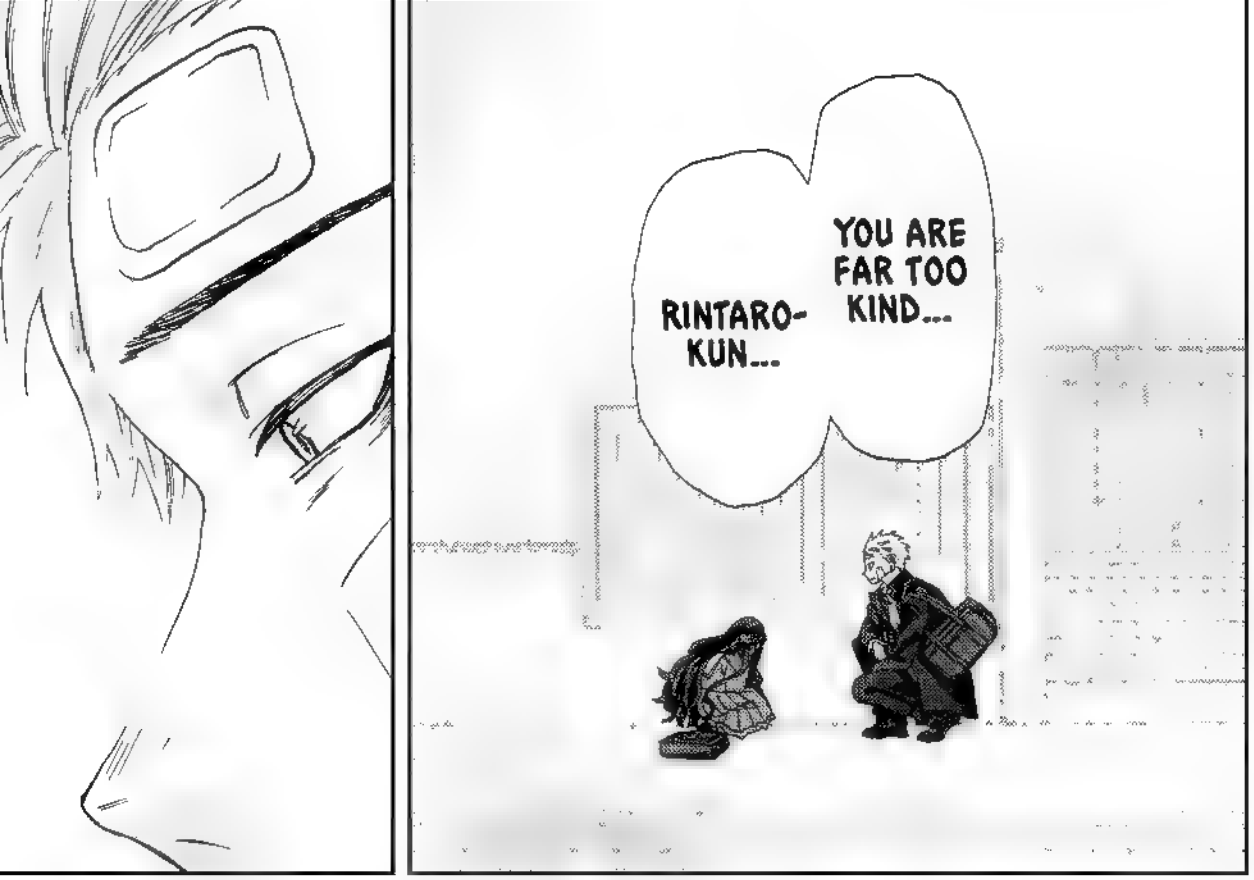

I'M JUST THE SAME AS THEM.
WHAT THEY DID TO ME...

!
THANKS.

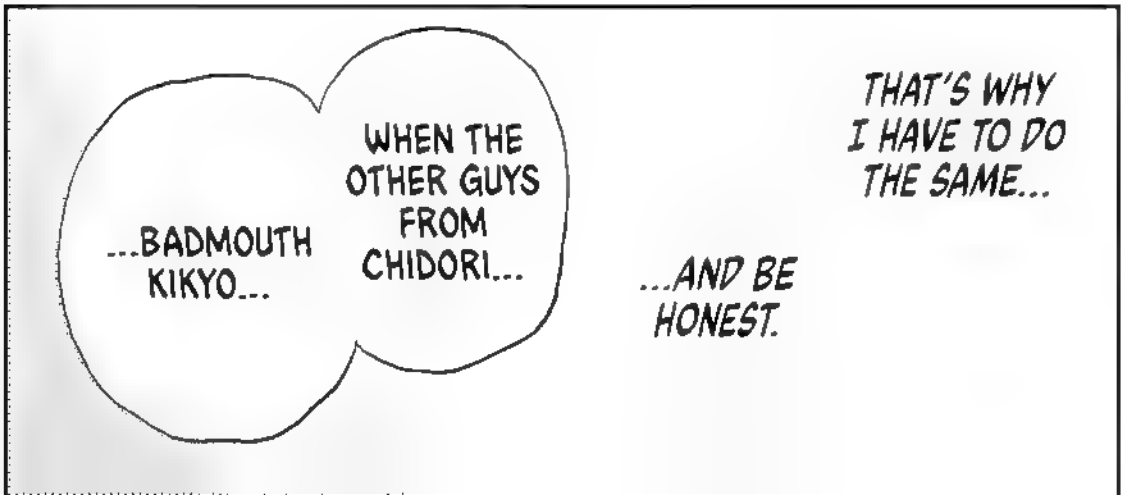
RINTARO-
KUN...

!
...IF I CAME EARLIER THAN USUAL.
I FIGURED I'D RUN INTO YOU...
WHY ARE YOU...? HOLD ON. WHEN DID YOU GET THAT BRUISE?!
I HURT YOU YESTERDAY.
AND I'M SORRY!
YOU LOOKED SAD WHEN YOU LEFT.
YOU HURT ME...?
SORRY...

WAA-AAA-AAA-AH...!
SHUMP
?!
WH-WHAT'S WRONG?!
KNOWING I MADE THAT KIND OF FACE...
GOSH, THAT'S SO EMBARRASSING... AAAHH...
...IT'S TRUE THAT I WAS SAD.
BUT THOSE WERE MY OWN SELFISH FEELINGS.
AND I LEFT WITHOUT SAYING A WORD...
YOU KEEP LOOKING AFTER ME...
...BUT I ONLY MADE YOU WORRY EVEN MORE.
BLUUUUSH
I'M SO SORRY...!
DON'T BE! IF ANYTHING, I'M THE ONE WHO...


RINTARO-KUN...
YOU ARE FAR TOO KIND...

...WAGURI-SAN'S BEEN UP FRONT WITH ME.
FROM THE VERY BEGINNING...


...BADMOUTH KIKYO...
WHEN THE OTHER GUYS FROM CHIDORI...
...AND BE HONEST.
THAT'S WHY I HAVE TO DO THE SAME...

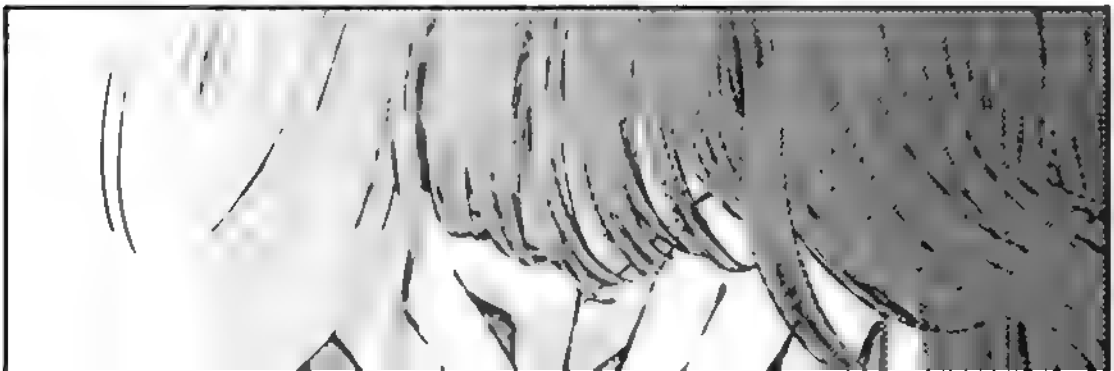
...THAT OUR SCHOOLS HATE EACH OTHER.
I'VE BASICALLY ACCEPTED THE FACT...
...I NEVER THINK MUCH ABOUT IT.

...I COULDN'T ACCEPT THAT.
WHEN I THOUGHT OF THEM BAD-MOUTHING YOU...

WHAT I TOOK BACK BEFORE ...
I'D LIKE TO REDO THAT.
DON'T TAKE IT BACK!
...
BUT I WAS WORRIED I'D PUT YOU IN DANGER BY STICKING AROUND.
I HATED IT...

I'M SORRY THAT I WAS ONLY FOCUSED ON OUR SCHOOLS...
...INSTEAD OF LOOKING AT YOU, WAGURI-SAN.

I WAS...
...HAPPY, TOO!



SMILE
RINTARO-KUN!
SMILE
BACK TO USUAL, HUH?

WHOA!
POP
I'M OKAY NOW! SORRY FOR WORRYING YOU!

ERM...
I... I KNOW?
BAM
MY NAME IS KAORUKO WAGURI.
TWIRL
AND YOU ARE...

CHIDORI AND KIKYO...
...DON'T MATTER TO ME.
...RINTARO TSUMUGI-KUN.

I WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT YOU BECAUSE YOU'RE RINTARO-KUN.
I DON'T CARE ABOUT ANYTHING ELSE.

2-1

I'M... SORRY ABOUT YESTERDAY.
THANK GOD FOR THAT.
NOBODY'S HERE YET...
RATTLE
WHY WAS I EVEN WORRIED IN THE FIRST PLACE...?
Hahaha!
OH, I WASN'T BOTHERED BY THAT!
I SUDDENLY PULLED THE CURTAINS CLOSED.
THAT PROBABLY MADE YOU FEEL BAD.
UM, PROB-ABLY?
THAT REMINDS ME! SINCE IT'S STILL EARLY, NOBODY SHOULD BE IN OUR CLASSROOMS AT THE MOMENT, RIGHT?
SHWIP
THEN...

I WANNA GET TO KNOW...

I THOUGHT...

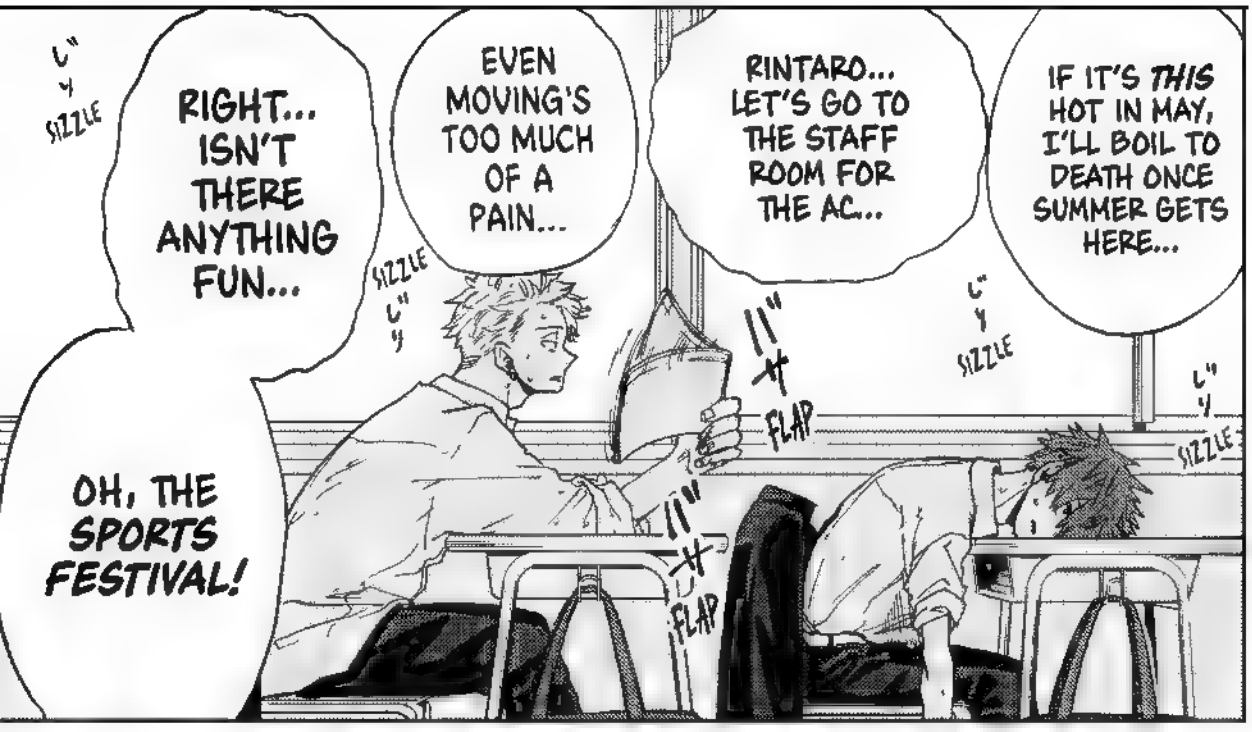
...WAGURI-SAN.

...I WOULD NEVER COME IN CONTACT WITH THAT WORLD.

BUT NOW...

...IT FEELS LIKE I'VE GOTTEN A BIT CLOSER.

...HOOO-
OOOOOOT!
BLAZE
SOOOO-
OOOOO...


SIZZLE
RIGHT... ISN'T THERE ANYTHING FUN...
EVEN MOVING'S TOO MUCH OF A PAIN...
RINTARO... LET'S GO TO THE STAFF ROOM FOR THE AC...
IF IT'S THIS HOT IN MAY, I'LL BOIL TO DEATH ONCE SUMMER GETS HERE...
SIZZLE
FLAP
SIZZLE
OH, THE SPORTS FESTIVAL!

IT'S GONNA BE AWESOME!
LET'S WIN THIS THING, RINTARO!
SOUNDS GOOD.

WHAT?
WE'VE GOT THE SPORTS FESTIVAL THIS MONTH, RIGHT?
OH, YEAH.

I HATE TO BREAK IT TO YOU...
...BUT YOU KNOW YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SPORTS FESTIVAL, RIGHT?

...WHAT?

Chapter 3: Exam Crunch

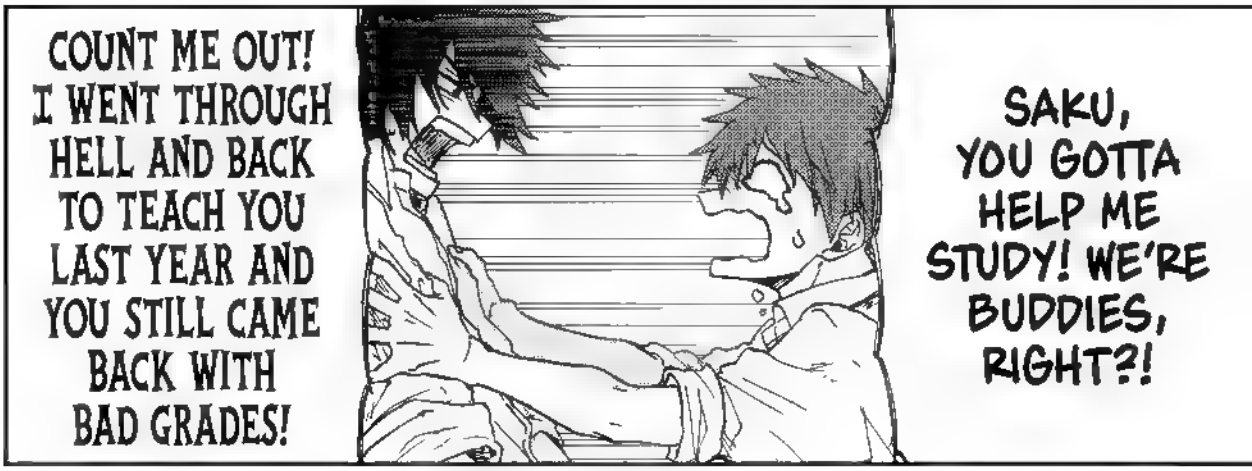
DOOM
DIDN'T YOU LEAVE FOR THE AC?
...HUH?
WELL, I'M SURE YOU'LL MUDDLE THROUGH, LIKE ALWAYS.
THAT'S NOT GONNA HAPPEN THIS TIME.
...WAIT, MIDTERMS? BUT THEY HAVEN'T EVEN STARTED YET.
ISN'T THAT THE SAME AS ALWAYS?
WE'RE GETTING SUPPLE-MENTARY EXAMS FOR OUR MID-TERMS...
...WHAT?
...
HUH? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

SECOND-YEARS LIKE YOU TEND TO SLACK OFF, SO WE GOTTA RAMP IT UP... AT LEAST, THAT'S WHAT MY DEPARTMENT HEAD SAYS.
SO, IN PREPARATION FOR FINALS, ANYBODY WHO GETS A FAILING GRADE DURING MIDTERMS WILL HAVE SUPPLEMENTARY EXAMS INSTEAD OF PARTICIPATING IN THE SPORTS FESTIVAL.
May Midterms
Sports Festival
June Finals
MIDTERMS THIS TIME ARE GONNA BE A BIT TOUGHER THAN USUAL.
WH-WHY JUST US?!
YOU TWO'VE STUCK OUT SINCE YOUR FIRST YEAR IN TERMS OF DANGER LEVEL.
BUT YOU DON'T KNOW FOR SURE THAT WE'LL END UP FAILING AGAIN, RIGHT?!
UGH
I saw you came here for the AC, so I called you over.
I FIGURED THIS REVELATION WOULD PROBABLY BE A BIT OF A SHOCK FOR YOU TWO...
YOU HAVE ZERO FAITH IN US, HUH?!
...SO I TOLD YOU AHEAD OF TIME.
WELL, YOU'LL BE FINE AS LONG AS YOU DON'T FAIL ANY SUBJECTS.
THEN... PROMISE US A REWARD!
Hmmmmmm
THEN, CAN YOU PULL IT OFF?
NO WAY!
SEE?

IF YOU WIN AT THE SPORTS FESTIVAL, I'LL TREAT YOU TO SOME ICE CREAM!
Homeroom teacher, Tsukada
YOU'RE THE BEST, TSUKA-CHAN!
WE'LL DO OUR BEST!

...THE REALITY HAS STARTED TO SET IN, HUH?
MUMBLE
?"
MUMBLE
?"
MUMBLE
?"
MUMBLE
?"
THIS IS SERIOUSLY BAD... HOW MANY HOURS DO I HAVE TO STUDY A DAY FOR THAT... I CAN'T EVEN FOCUS FOR TEN MINUTES STRAIGHT...
THIS SEEMS HOPELESS, ALL RIGHT...

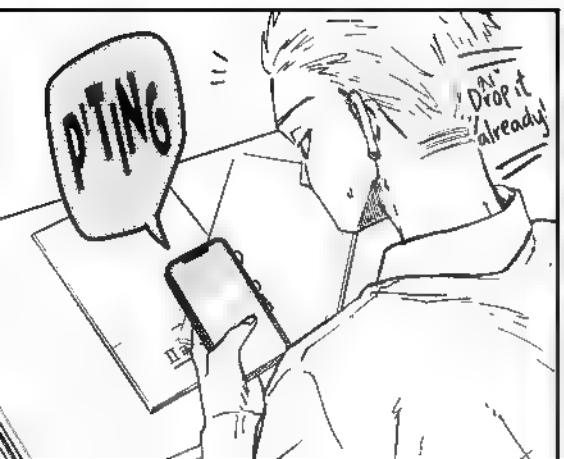
...AND THAT BROUGHT YOU HERE.
BUT FROM THE LOOKS OF IT...


SAKU, YOU GOTTA HELP ME STUDY! WE'RE BUDDIES, RIGHT?!
COUNT ME OUT! I WENT THROUGH HELL AND BACK TO TEACH YOU LAST YEAR AND YOU STILL CAME BACK WITH BAD GRADES!

YOU GONNA BE OKAY, RINTARO?
I THINK I'M DONE FOR, TOO...
MIND TEACHING ME, YORITA?
I WOULD, BUT THERE'S A LOT OF STUFF I'M UNSURE ABOUT, MYSELF...
IF WE'RE GONNA GROUP UP, I'D RATHER HAVE SAKU-KUN WITH US, TOO.
FINE, I GET IT!

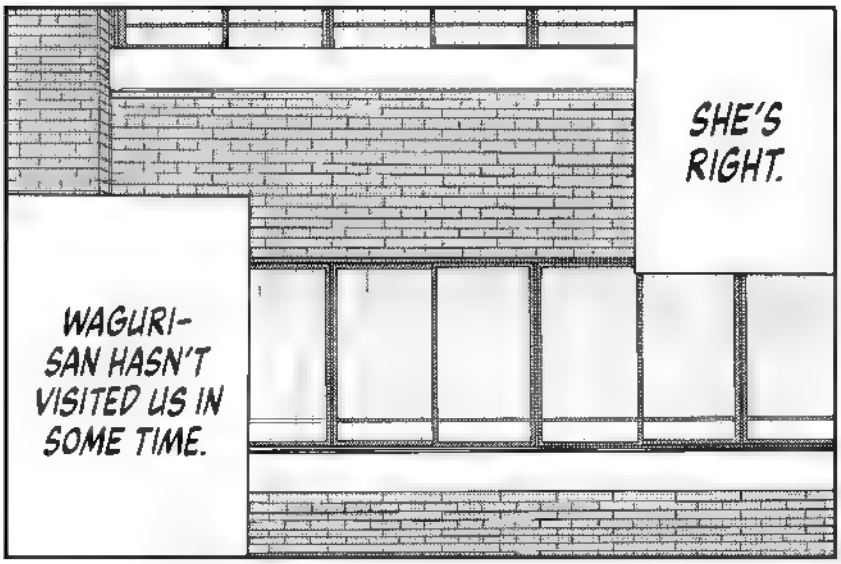
...SOUNDS GOOD TO ME. DO AS YOU LIKE.
AGAIN WITH THAT...

YOU'RE THAT DESPERATE TO KEEP US OUTTA THE SPORTS FESTIVAL, HUH?!
FINE, WE CAN DO IT WITHOUT YOU TWO!
WHY'RE YOU GETTING MAD AT THEM?!

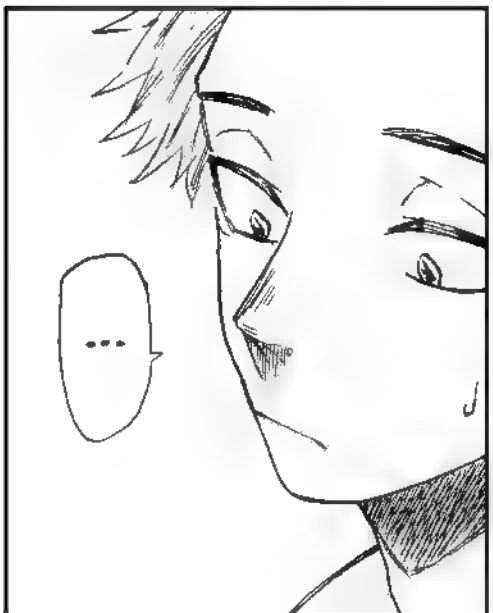

PTING
Drop it already!

BZZT
BZZT
BZZT

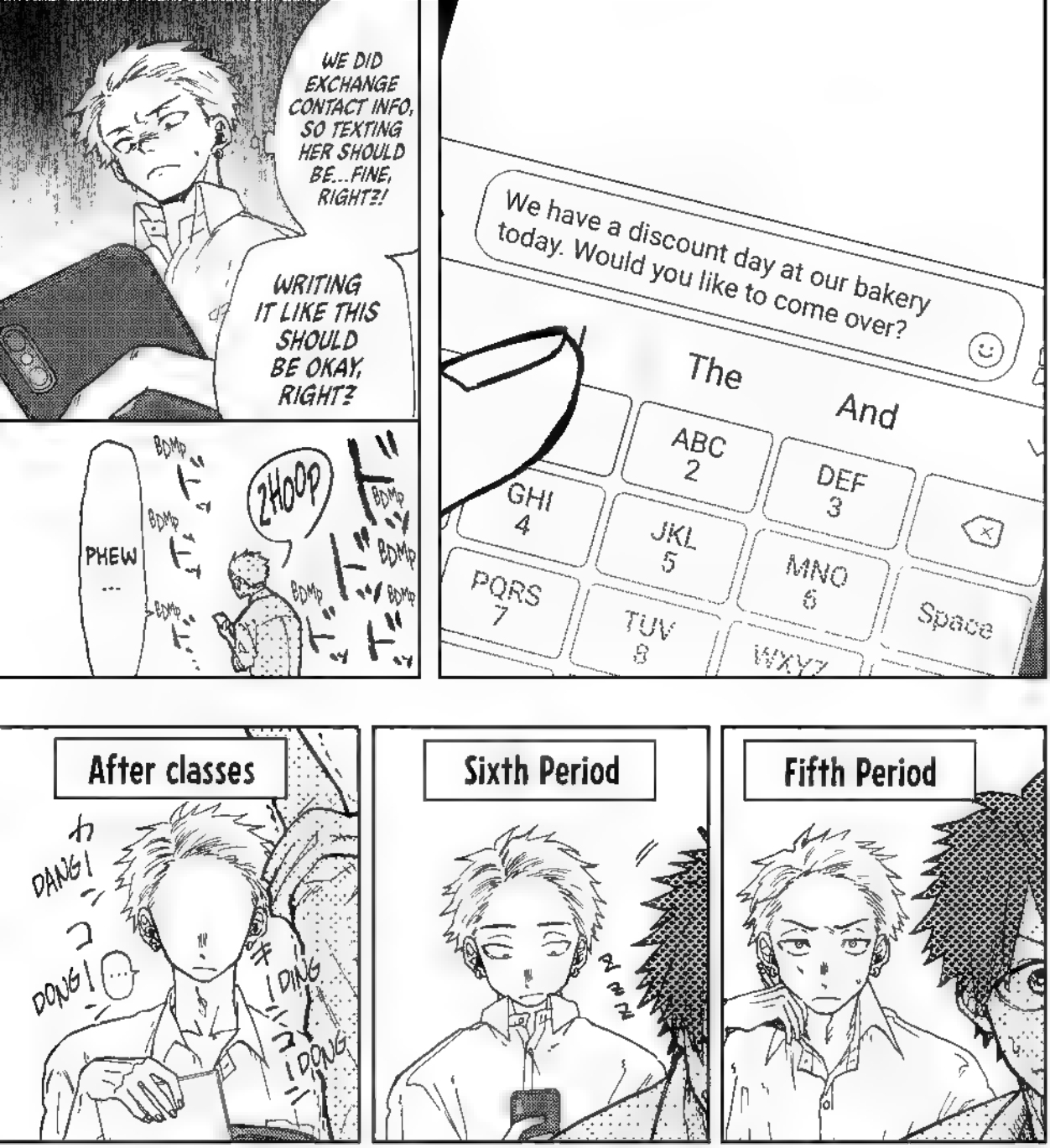
OH YEAH, WE DO THIS EVERY MONTH.
It's our store's discount day, so won't you invite Waguri-san? I haven't seen her in a while!


SHE'S RIGHT.
WAGURI-SAN HASN'T VISITED US IN SOME TIME.

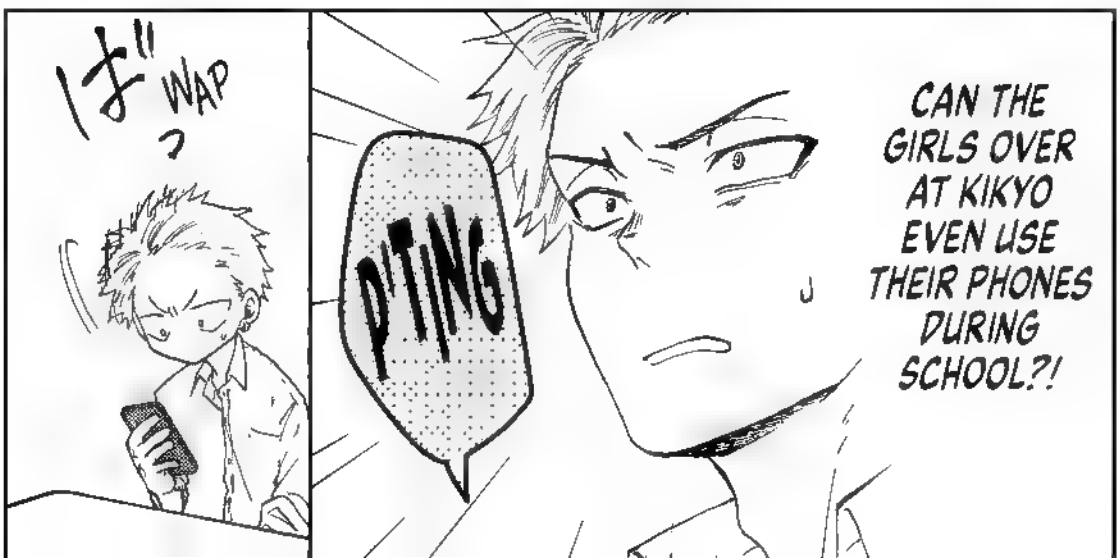
...

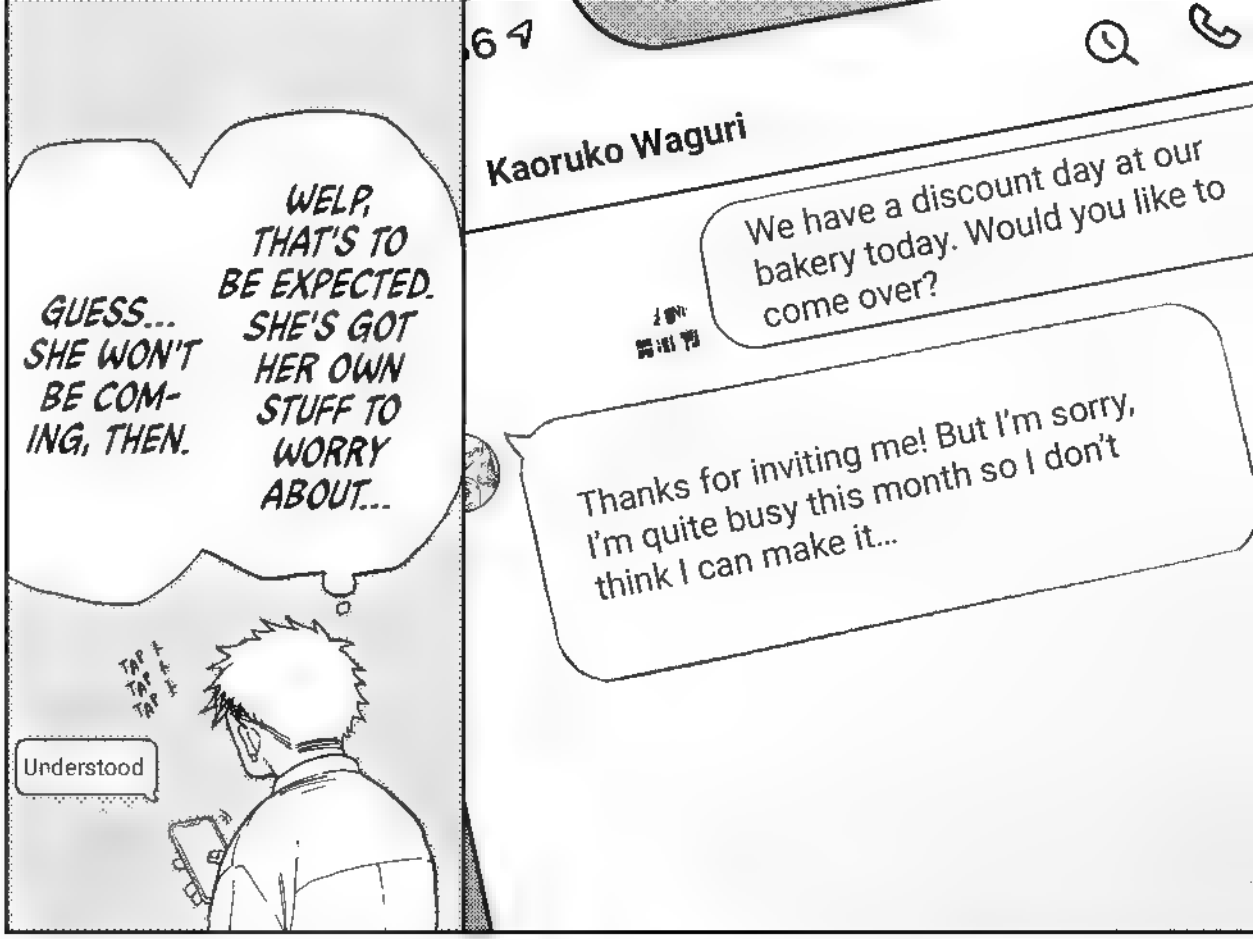

...

THEN AGAIN, MOM SAID SHE ONLY STOPPED BY ONCE OR TWICE A MONTH.
SHE PROBABLY CAN'T JUST THROW MONEY AROUND, EVEN IF SHE DOES GO TO A PRESTIGIOUS SCHOOL.

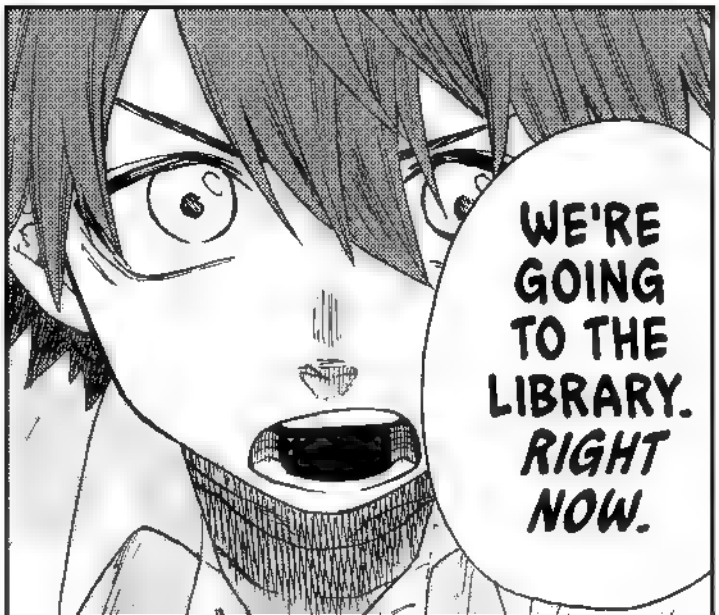

WE DID EXCHANGE CONTACT INFO, SO TEXTING HER SHOULD BE...FINE, RIGHT?!
WRITING IT LIKE THIS SHOULD BE OKAY, RIGHT?
PHEW...
BDMP
2HOOP
We have a discount day at our bakery today. Would you like to come over?
The
And
ABC 2
DEF 3
GHI 4
JKL 5
MNO 6
PQRS 7
TUV 8
WXYZ
Space

After classes
DANG!
DONG!
DING
DONG
Sixth Period
ZZZ
Fifth Period


WAP
PTING
CAN THE GIRLS OVER AT KIKYO EVEN USE THEIR PHONES DURING SCHOOL?!


Kaoruko Waguri
We have a discount day at our bakery today. Would you like to come over?
Thanks for inviting me! But I'm sorry, I'm quite busy this month so I don't think I can make it...
GUESS... SHE WON'T BE COM-ING, THEN.
WELP, THAT'S TO BE EXPECTED. SHE'S GOT HER OWN STUFF TO WORRY ABOUT...
TAP TAP TAP
Understood

BAM
WHOA?!
RIN-TARO!

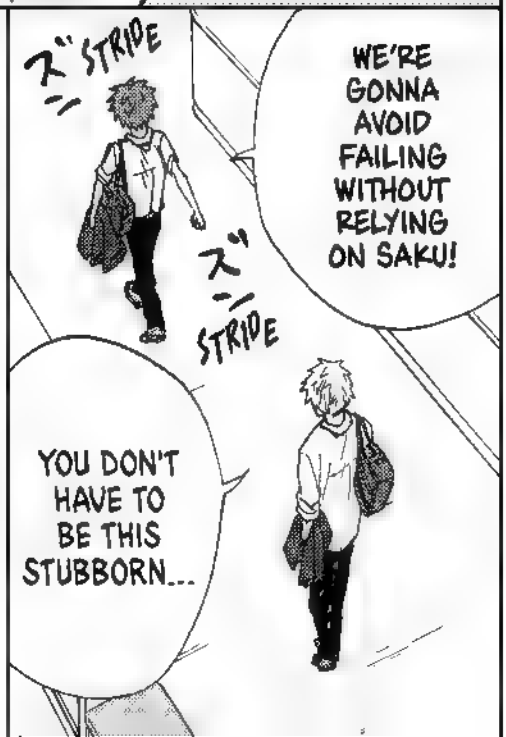

WE'RE GOING TO THE LIBRARY. RIGHT NOW.

...WAIT, WHY AM I SO DISAP-POINTED?

THE LIBRARY ROOM AT OUR SCHOOL DOESN'T HAVE AN AC, AND I DON'T WANNA DIE FROM HEATSTROKE!
HE JUST WANTS TO STEER CLEAR OF NATSUSAWA, HUH?

ALL RIGHT, LET'S GET STARTED!
KLAT
...'KAY.

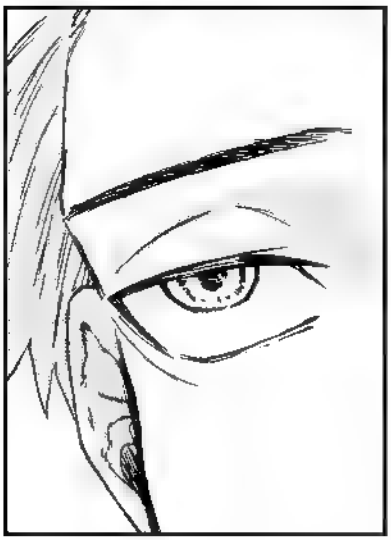
SCRITCH
SCRITCH
SCRITCH
SCRITCH
SCRITCH
SCRITCH

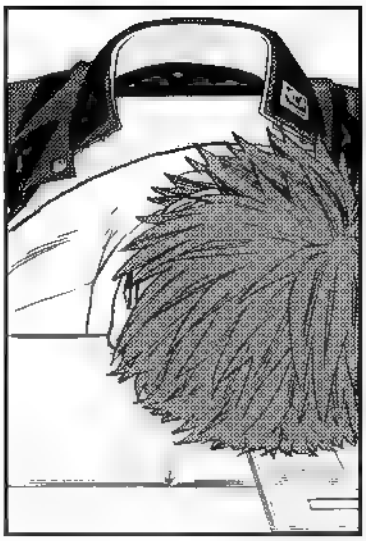

WE'RE GONNA AVOID FAILING WITHOUT RELYING ON SAKU!
STRIDE
STRIDE
YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE THIS STUBBORN...

...I CAN'T SOLVE ANY OF THIS!

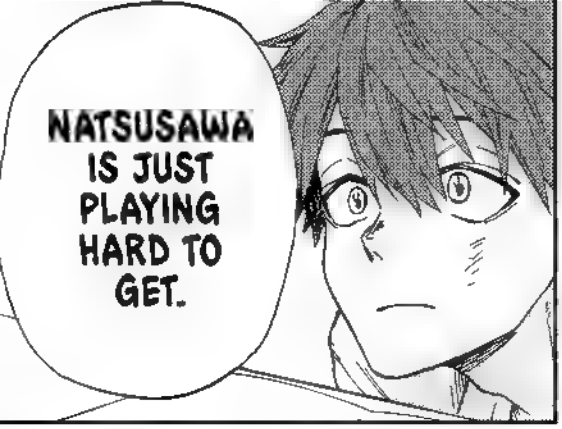
...WAS NATSUSAWA, REMEMBER?
THE ONLY ONE WHO BOTHERED TO TEACH US LAST YEAR...
GAAA-AAH!

...
MAYBE WE SHOULD BEG NATSUSAWA AFTER ALL?



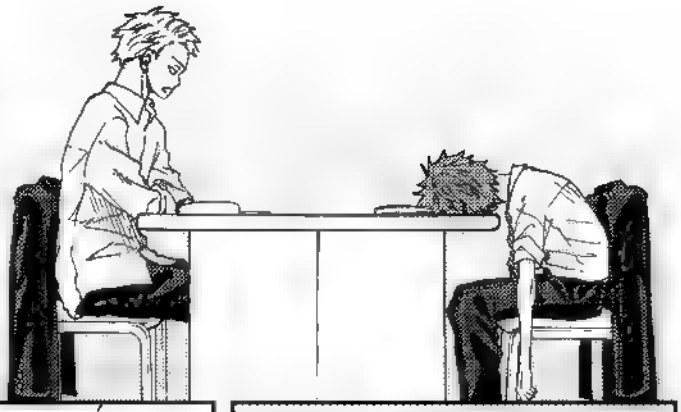


I MEAN, I FEEL BAD, OKAY?
HAVING HIM HELP US AND STILL FAILING...

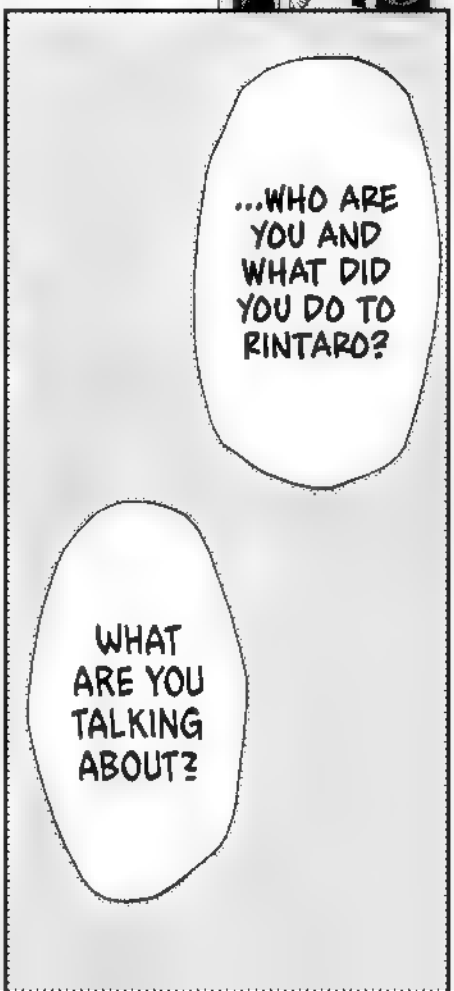

NATSUSAWA IS JUST PLAYING HARD TO GET.

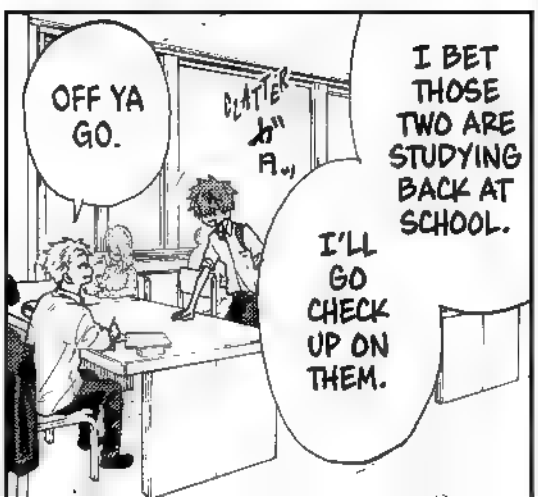
WE'RE ALL GONNA EAT ICE CREAM TOGETHER, REMEMBER?

THERE'S NO DOUBT THAT HE'S LOOKING FORWARD TO THE SPORTS FESTIVAL.



RUSTLE
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
ANY-WAY...
WE'RE GONNA GO FOR THE WIN WITH NATSUSAWA AND THE OTHERS, RIGHT?


...WHO ARE YOU AND WHAT DID YOU DO TO RINTARO?
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?


OFF YA GO.
CLATTER
I BET THOSE TWO ARE STUDYING BACK AT SCHOOL.
I'LL GO CHECK UP ON THEM.

OH, ALSO...

I'M GONNA APOLOGIZE REAL QUICK...
...AND BRING THEM BACK WITH ME, OKAY?

I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO THE FESTIVAL ...
BECAUSE YOU'RE WITH US, RINTARO.

...
OKAY.

JOLT
KLATTER
THUD
GLANCE
GLANCE

I THINK THERE WAS A BENCH OUTSIDE, RIGHT?
AND HE'S SO TALL, TOO.
HE'S GOT BLONDE HAIR...
WE DIDN'T GET TO THANK HIM...
DID HE... MAKE SPACE FOR US?
HE DID, RIGHT?

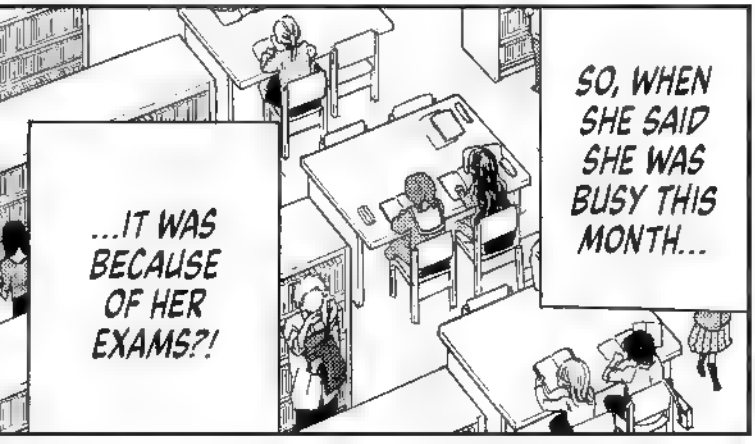
!
WHAT ABOUT HERE, KAORUKO?
FREEZE

TAP TAP TAP
GOTTA TELL USAMI WE'RE GONNA NEED A NEW TABLE.

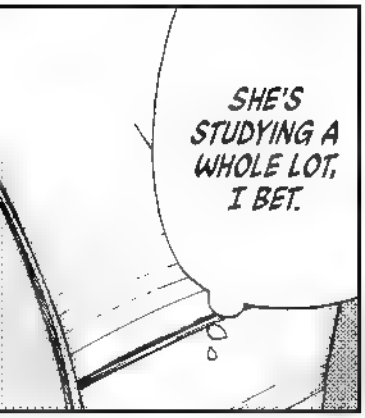
OH, THAT?
PEEK
KAORUKO ...?

YOU JUST DO THIS...

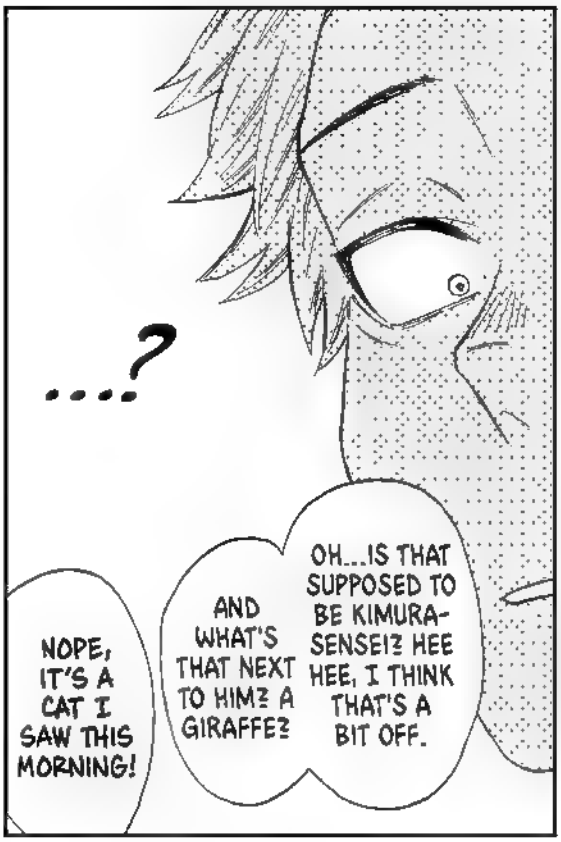
LIKE THIS?
COR-RECT!
WA...


...IT WAS BECAUSE OF HER EXAMS?!
SO, WHEN SHE SAID SHE WAS BUSY THIS MONTH...

HM?
WHAT WAS THAT? PROBABLY JUST MY IMAGINA-TION...


SHE'S STUDYING A WHOLE LOT, I BET.

WELL, IT'S NOT A PRESTIGIOUS SCHOOL FOR NOTHING.
PEEK



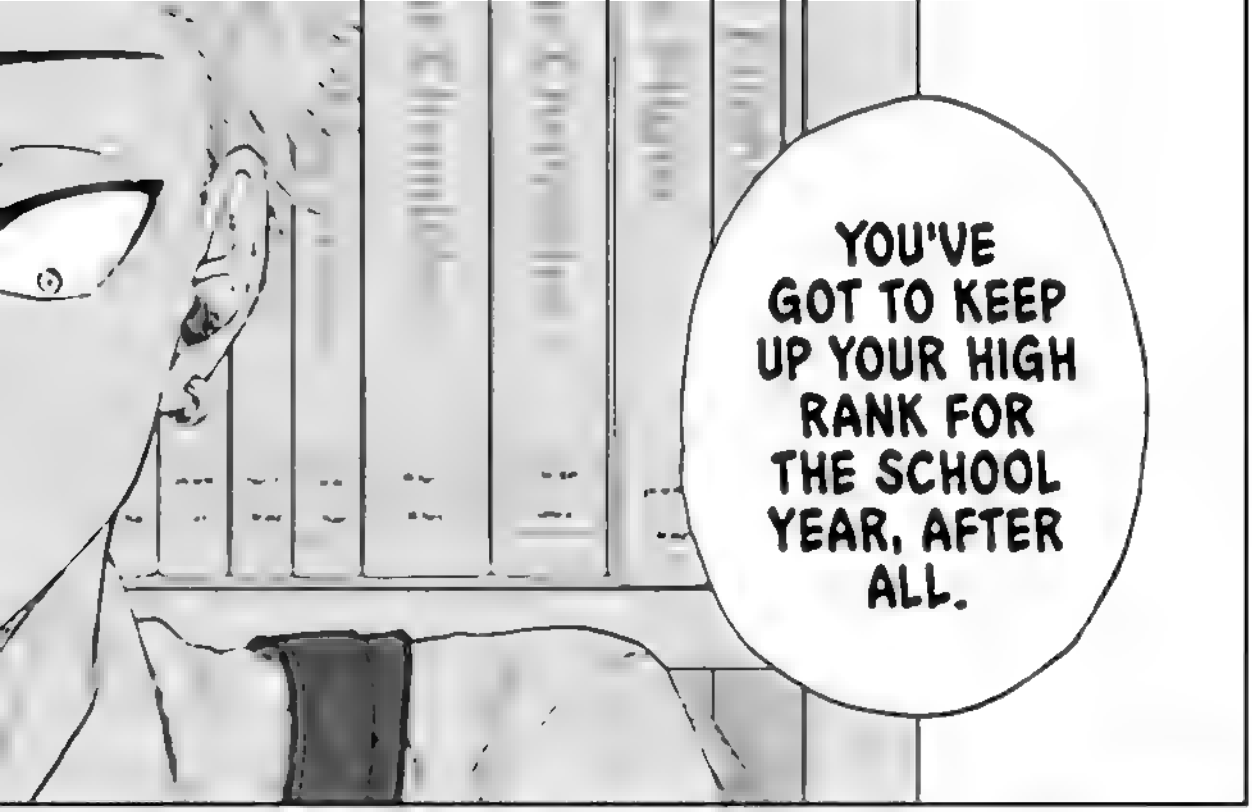
THIS... FEELS SO REFRESHING...

WELL, YOU PROBABLY NEED A LOT OF THAT.

I GUESS THIS IS WHO SHE REALLY IS.

AND SHE'S SPEAKING MUCH MORE INFORMALLY, TOO.

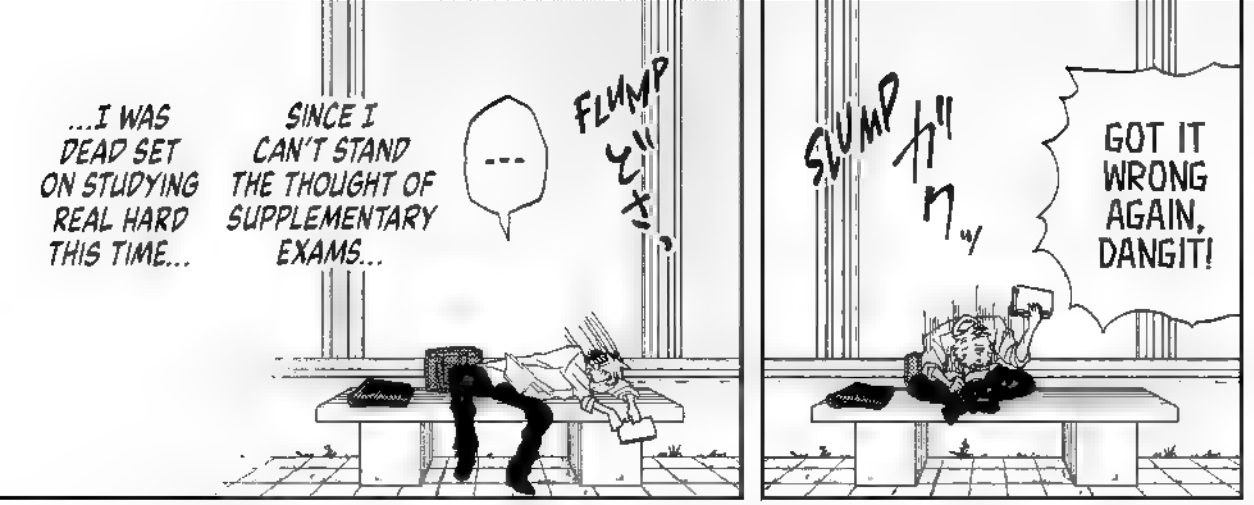
SO WAGURI-SAN...DRAWS DOODLES LIKE THAT, TOO?


YOU'VE GOT TO KEEP UP YOUR HIGH RANK FOR THE SCHOOL YEAR, AFTER ALL.

BUT I'M THE ONE WHO SAID I'D WORK TOWARDS THAT.
YEAH...

SO, IT'S TOTALLY FINE!
HOW AD-MIRABLE...
ANYWAY, SHE'S REALLY TAKING HER TIME, HUH?
I WONDER HOW FAR SHE'S GONE..

WAGURI-SAN IS AMAZING..
EVEN AMONGST KIKYO STUDENTS...
SHE'S EXTREMELY SMART.
SO HOW DID A DROPOUT FAILURE FROM A SCHOOL OF IDIOTS LIKE ME...
...GET INVOLVED WITH AN INCREDIBLE PERSON LIKE HER?!


...I WAS DEAD SET ON STUDYING REAL HARD THIS TIME...
SINCE I CAN'T STAND THE THOUGHT OF SUPPLEMENTARY EXAMS...

FLUMP
SLUMP
GOT IT WRONG AGAIN, DANGIT!

...IS JUST A PIPE DREAM FOR ME?
MAYBE NOT FAILING...
?!
ROLL
BUT EVEN WITH NATSUSAWA'S HELP LAST YEAR, I STILL MAJORLY FAILED.

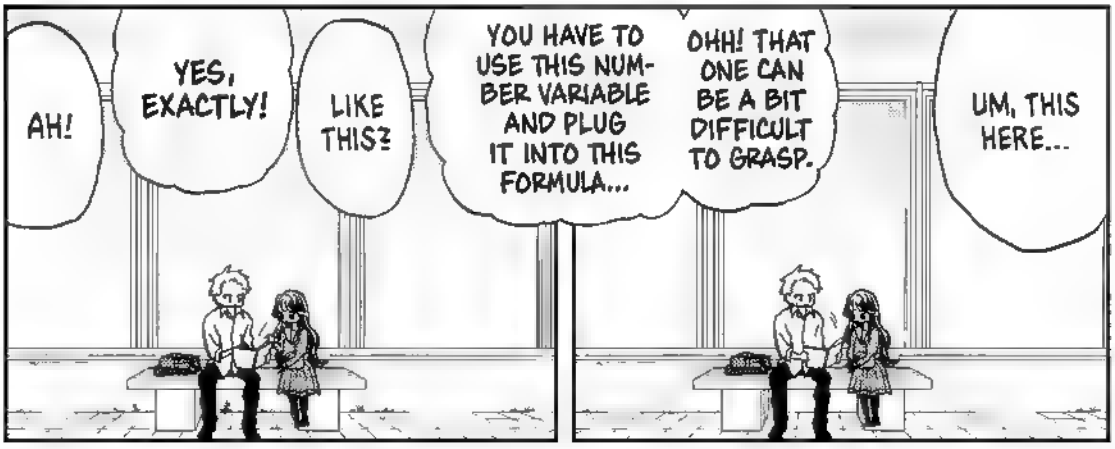
...GIVE UP, RIGHT?
I MIGHT AS WELL ...

...BE-CAUSE YOU'RE WITH US, RINTARO.
I'M LOOK-ING FOR-WARD TO THE FES-TIVAL...

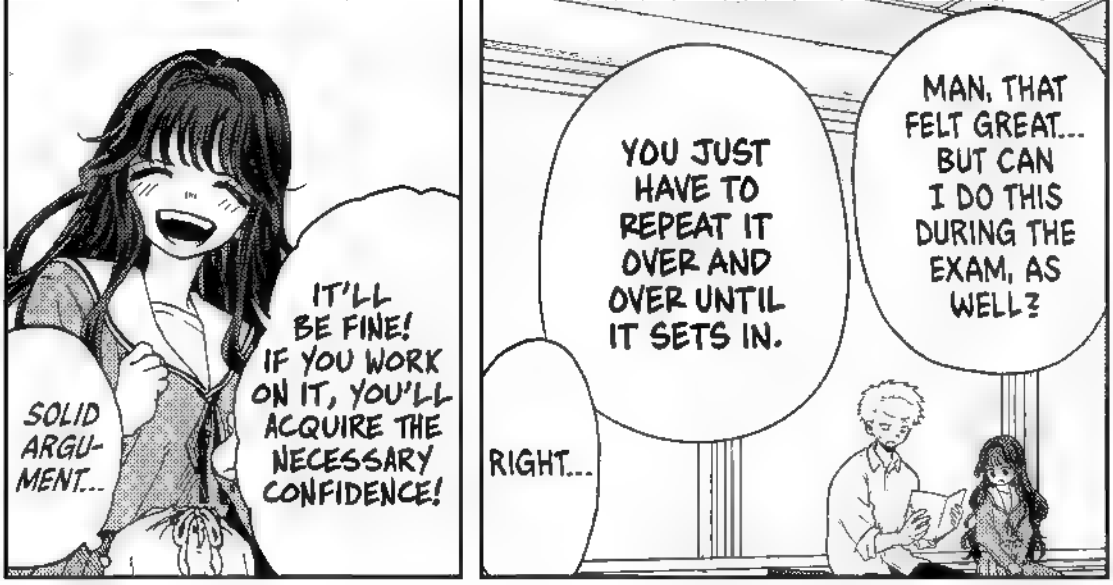
RINTARO-KUN?!
ARE YOU TAKING A NAP HERE?

WEREN'T YOU JUST AT THE LIBRAR... ACK...!
HEH, I KNEW IT WAS YOU!
IT'S BEEN A WHILE, HASN'T IT?
WAGURI-SAN?!
Here you go.
Thank you.
YEAH...
OH, A TEXTBOOK... SO YOU WERE OUT HERE STUDYING, RINTARO-KUN?
EVEN WHEN I WORK THROUGH A PROBLEM, IT'S RIDDLED WITH MISTAKES.
BUT AT THIS RATE, THE ONLY THING I'M GONNA WIN IS A PRIZE FOR FAILING...
I WAS FEELING A BIT HUNGRY, TOO, SO I THOUGHT I MIGHT AS WELL GRAB A SNACK.
I THOUGHT I SAW A FAMILIAR BACK IN THE DISTANCE, AND I WAS CURIOUS, SO I CAME OUT.

!
WHICH ONE?


AH!
YES, EXACTLY!
LIKE THIS?
YOU HAVE TO USE THIS NUMBER VARIABLE AND PLUG IT INTO THIS FORMULA...
OHH! THAT ONE CAN BE A BIT DIFFICULT TO GRASP.
UM, THIS HERE...

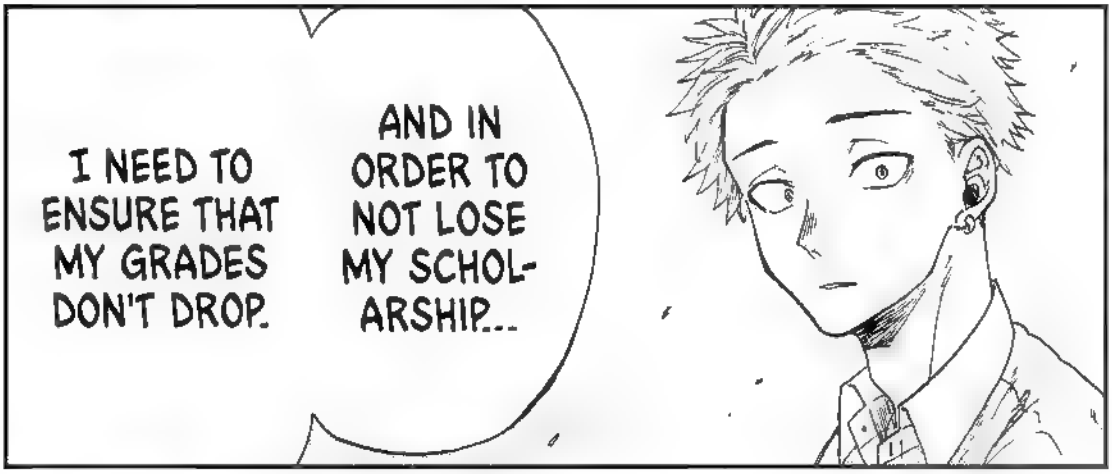
YOU GOT IT RIGHT! WELL DONE!
I DID IT!


SOLID ARGU-MENT...
IT'LL BE FINE! IF YOU WORK ON IT, YOU'LL ACQUIRE THE NECESSARY CONFIDENCE!
RIGHT...
YOU JUST HAVE TO REPEAT IT OVER AND OVER UNTIL IT SETS IN.
MAN, THAT FELT GREAT... BUT CAN I DO THIS DURING THE EXAM, AS WELL?

STUDYING FOR EXAMS IS ONE THING, BUT MY FOOD EXPENSES ARE SLOWLY CHIPPING AWAY AT MY SAVINGS.
THEN I'LL MAKE SURE TO KEEP NEXT MONTH FREE!
OH, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. WE DO THIS EVERY MONTH, ANYWAY.
OH YEAH! I'M SORRY I COULDN'T COME FOR THE DISCOUNT DAY...EVEN THOUGH YOU INVITED ME.

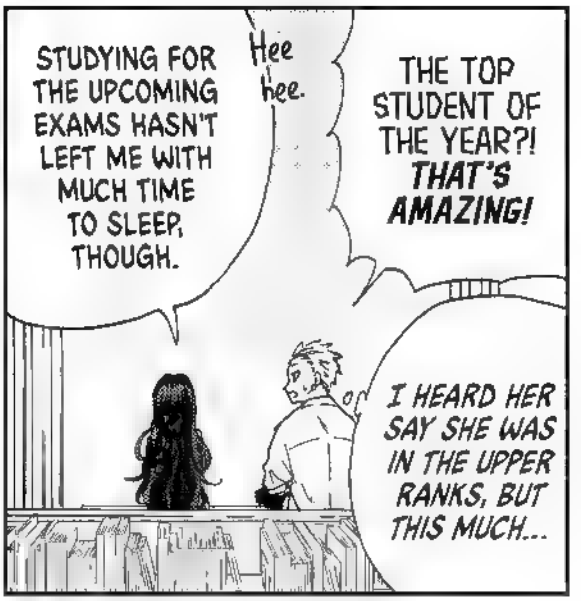
YOU'RE A FANCY RICH KID AND YOU STILL WORK?!
JUST WHAT KIND OF IMAGE DO YOU HAVE OF ME?
Ha ha!
YES. I USUALLY WORK A LOT DURING LONG BREAKS...
...AND WHENEVER I CAN FIND THE EXTRA TIME.
PART-TIME JOB?!
YOU'RE PAYING ALL OF THAT OUT OF YOUR OWN POCKET?
YES! WITH THE MONEY I EARN FROM MY PART-TIME JOB.

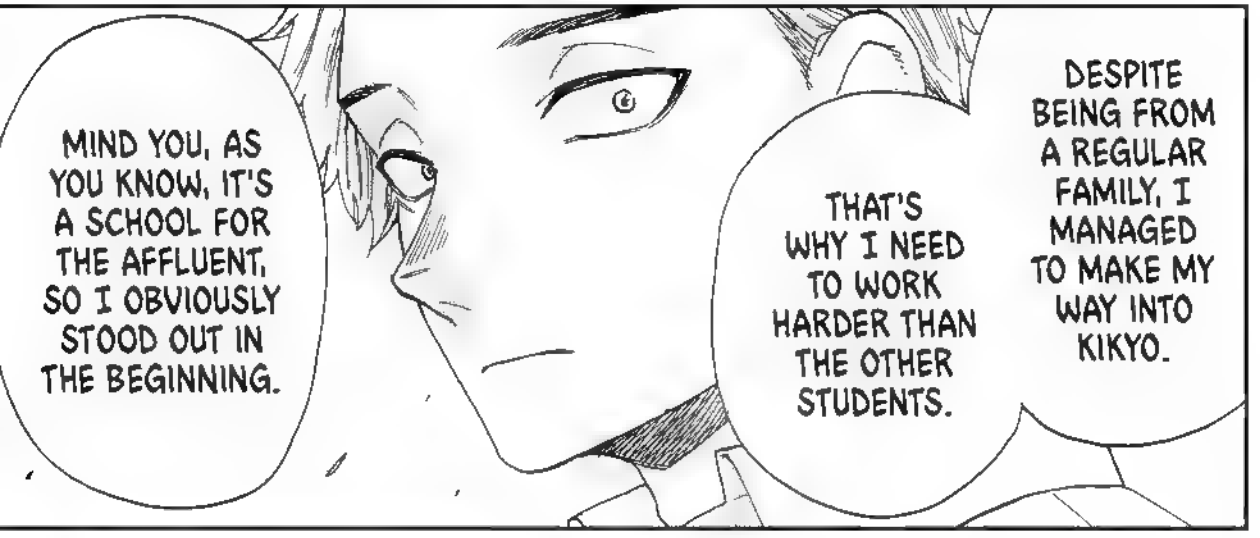
I'M ACTUALLY NOT FROM A WELL-TO-DO FAMILY.
I SIMPLY GOT INTO KIKYO THROUGH A SCHOL-ARSHIP.


I NEED TO ENSURE THAT MY GRADES DON'T DROP.
AND IN ORDER TO NOT LOSE MY SCHOL-ARSHIP...

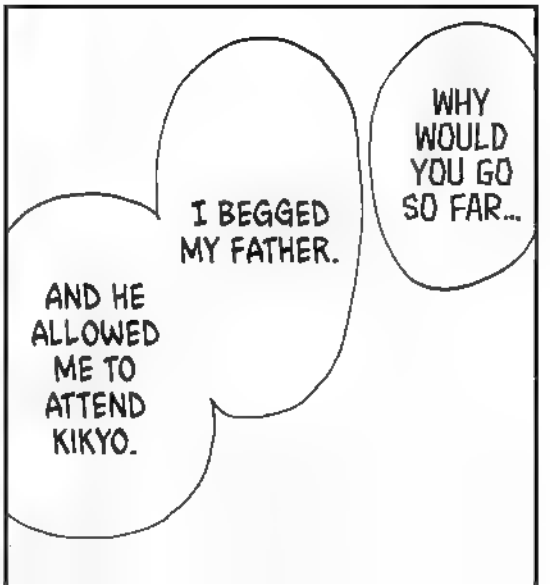
IN FACT, I HAVE MANAGED TO KEEP THE TOP SPOT FOR A WHILE NOW!

SQUEEZE
THAT'S... SERIOUSLY BAD-ASS.
I PINCH MY HAND LIKE THIS TO STAY AWAKE DURING CLASS.


STUDYING FOR THE UPCOMING EXAMS HASN'T LEFT ME WITH MUCH TIME TO SLEEP, THOUGH.
Hee hee.
THE TOP STUDENT OF THE YEAR?! THAT'S AMAZING!
I HEARD HER SAY SHE WAS IN THE UPPER RANKS, BUT THIS MUCH...


MIND YOU, AS YOU KNOW, IT'S A SCHOOL FOR THE AFFLUENT, SO I OBVIOUSLY STOOD OUT IN THE BEGINNING.
THAT'S WHY I NEED TO WORK HARDER THAN THE OTHER STUDENTS.
DESPITE BEING FROM A REGULAR FAMILY, I MANAGED TO MAKE MY WAY INTO KIKYO.

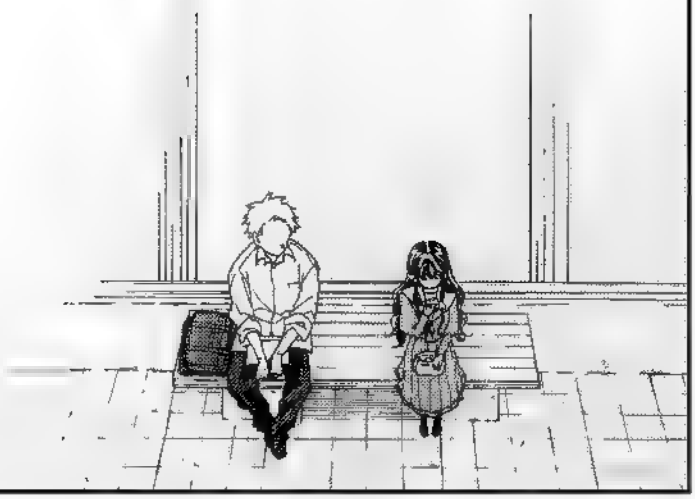
THEN...WHEN I STARTED ATTENDING KIKYO...IT PLANTED A SEED IN ME, WHICH STARTED TO GROW...
SO I DON'T WANT TO WASTE THE OPPORTUNITY HE'S GIVEN ME.


WHY WOULD YOU GO SO FAR...
I BEGGED MY FATHER.
AND HE ALLOWED ME TO ATTEND KIKYO.

...WITH WAGURI-SAN...

THE MORE TIME I SPEND...

...THE MORE I REALIZE HOW I'VE BEEN LOOKING AT HER THROUGH TINTED GLASS.



...START ACTING LIKE THE GUYS THAT I HATED THE MOST?

I DESPISE MYSELF FOR THIS.

ANY OF IT... ALL OF IT.

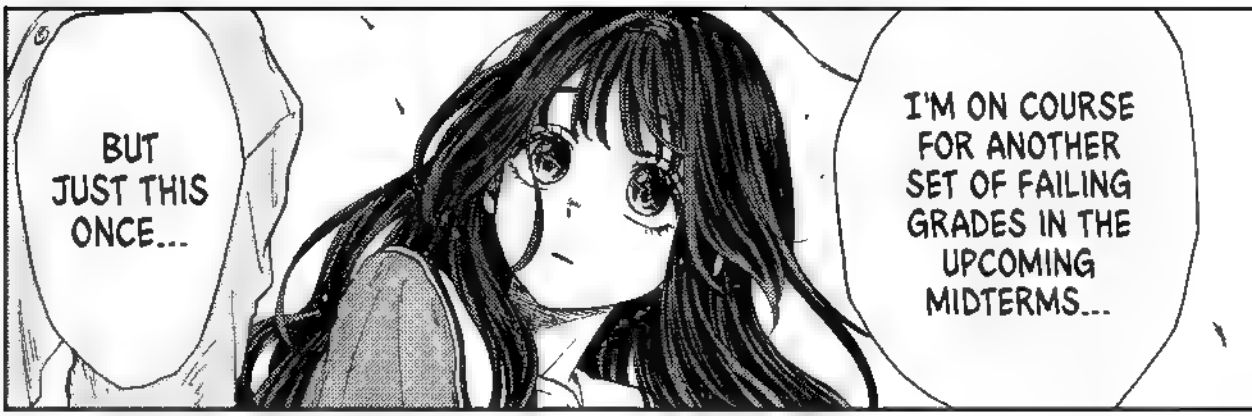
WHEN DID I...

HOW LAME...

WAGURI-SAN...

JUST ONE THING...

WOULD YOU MIND...
...TEACHING ME?

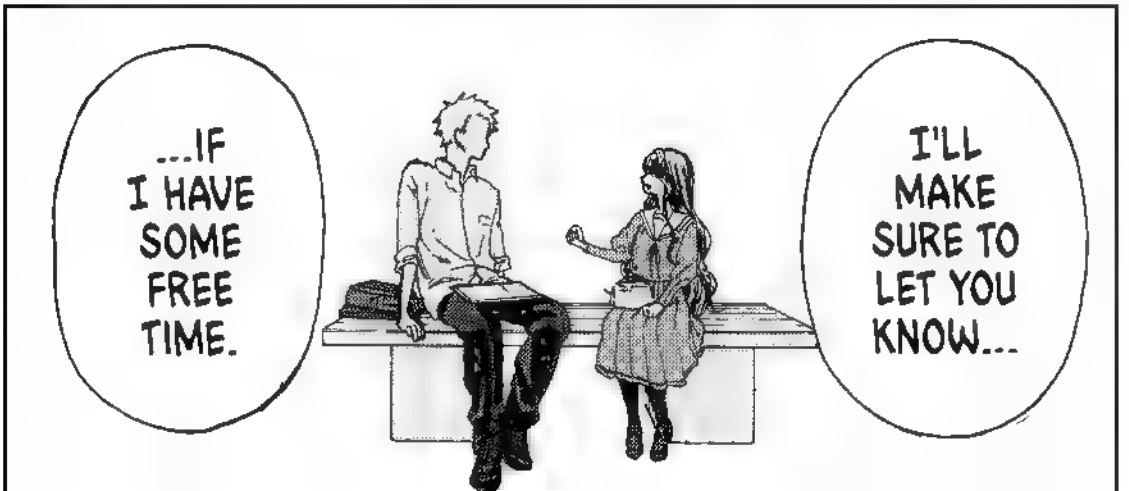

BUT JUST THIS ONCE...
I'M ON COURSE FOR ANOTHER SET OF FAILING GRADES IN THE UPCOMING MIDTERMS...

...I CAN'T AFFORD TO FAIL.

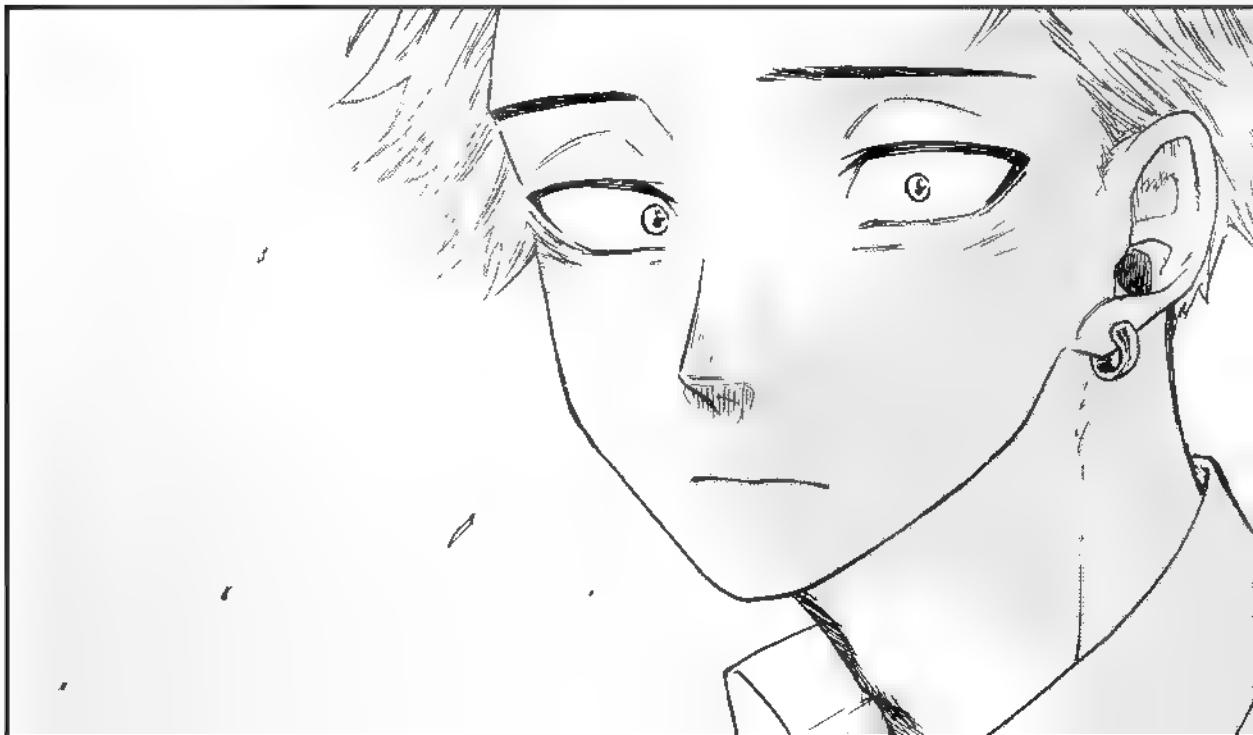
I DON'T WANT TO GET USED TO FAILURE.

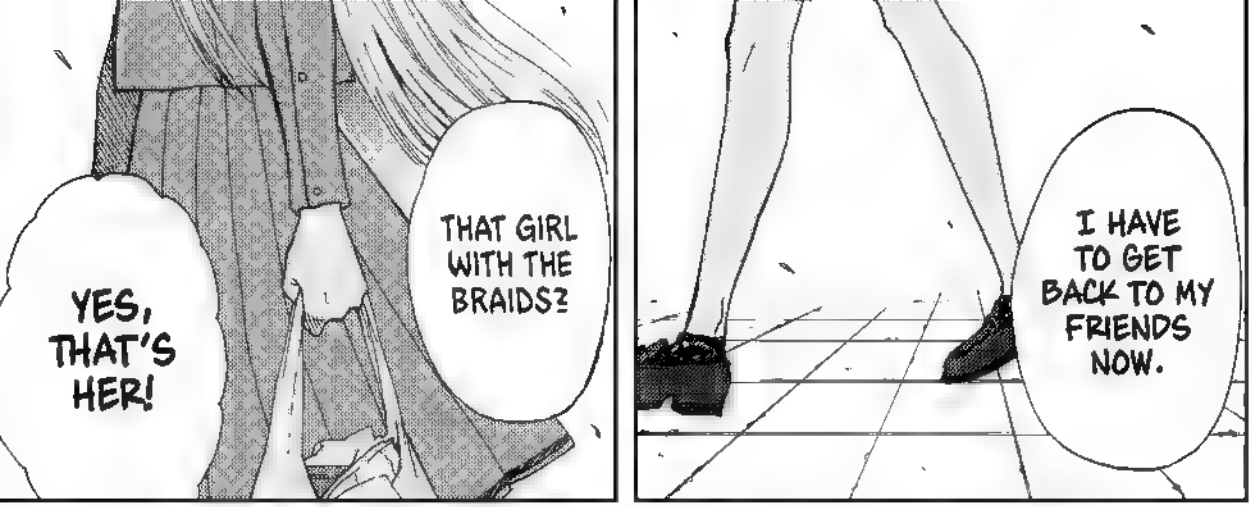
HERE YOU GO!
It's left over.
THRUST
!

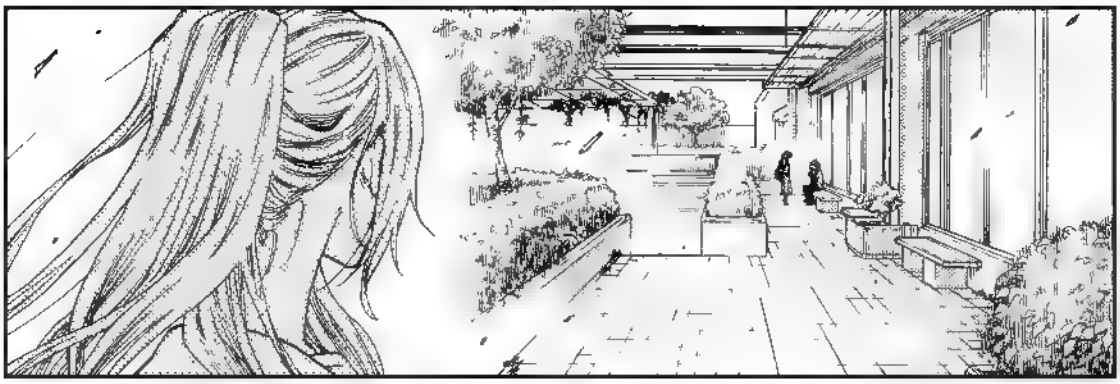
JUST WHENEVER YOU'RE FREE IS GOOD!
THEN AGAIN, YOU PROBABLY NEED ALL YOUR FREE TIME TO SLEEP, SO...

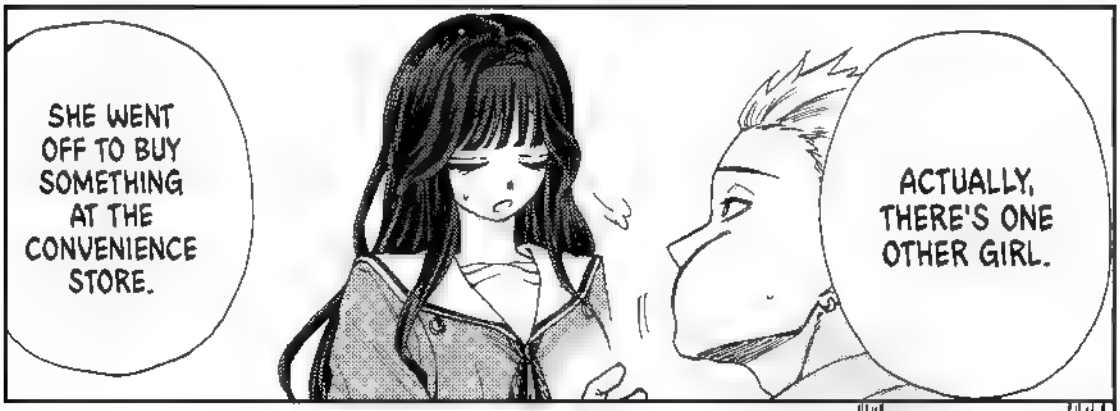

...IF I HAVE SOME FREE TIME.
I'LL MAKE SURE TO LET YOU KNOW...

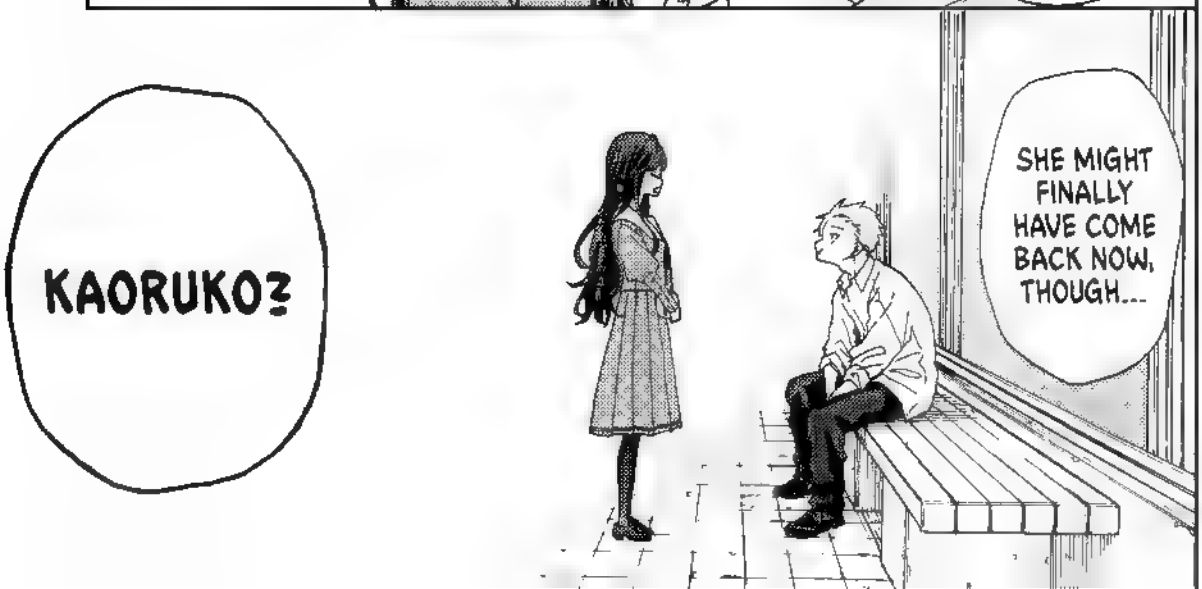
SO LET'S BOTH DO OUR BEST FOR THE EXAMS!



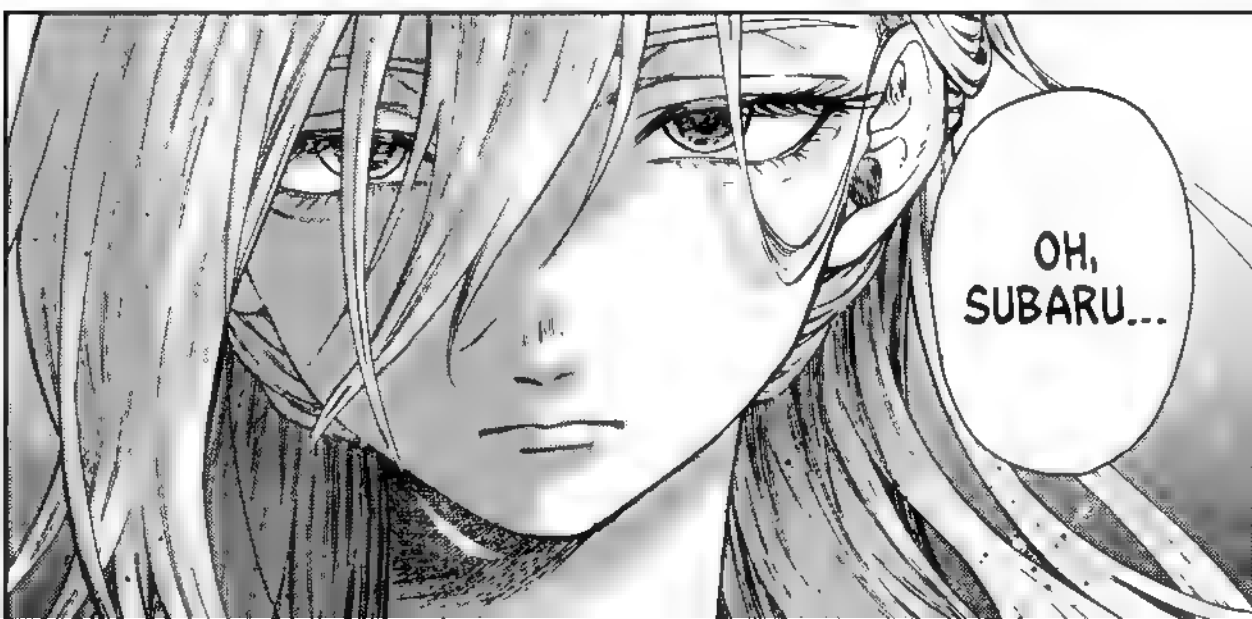

YES, THAT'S HER!
THAT GIRL WITH THE BRAIDS?
I HAVE TO GET BACK TO MY FRIENDS NOW.



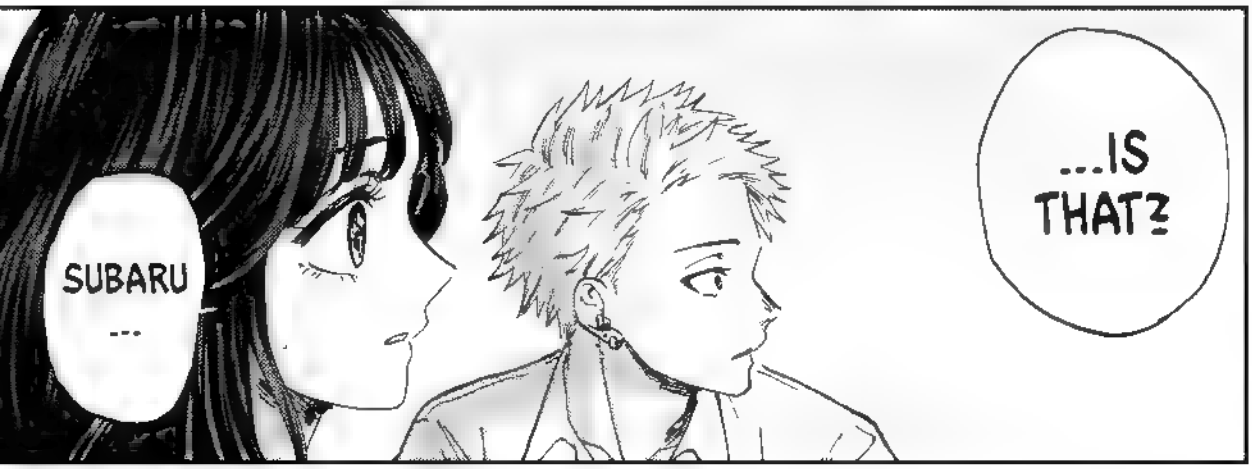

SHE WENT OFF TO BUY SOMETHING AT THE CONVENIENCE STORE.
ACTUALLY, THERE'S ONE OTHER GIRL.

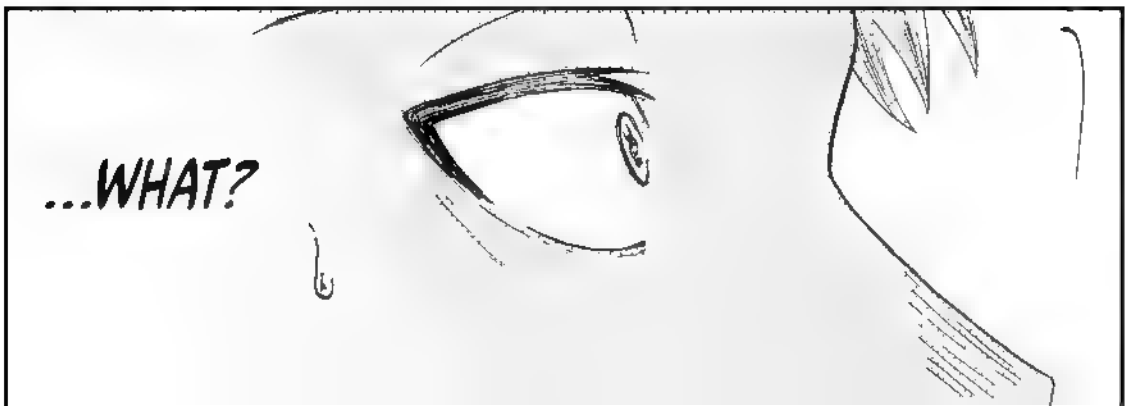

KAORUKO?
SHE MIGHT FINALLY HAVE COME BACK NOW, THOUGH...

WHO...
...IS THAT?

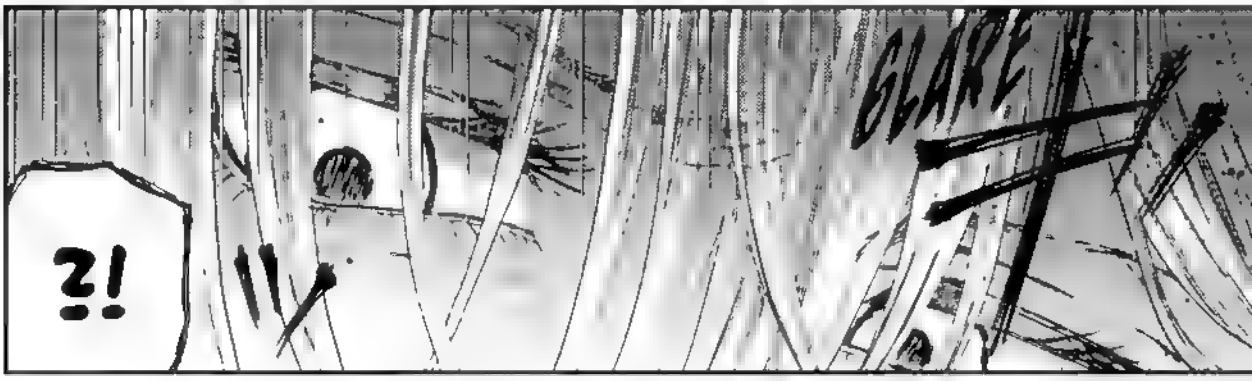

OH, SUBARU...

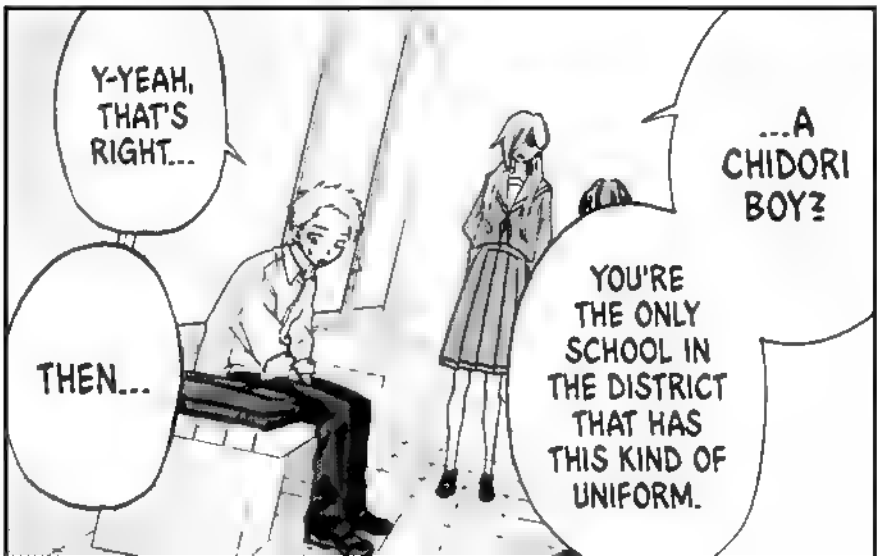
Chapter 4: Kaoruko's Friend





SILVER HAIR?!
I'VE ONLY SEEN THAT IN MOVIES!
IS SHE A FOREIGNER? WHAT A SIGHT! WOW...


GLARE
?!


Y-YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT...
THEN...
...A CHIDORI BOY?
YOU'RE THE ONLY SCHOOL IN THE DISTRICT THAT HAS THIS KIND OF UNIFORM.

Not like I'm one to talk, but still...
AND SHE'S SCARY, TOO...
ARE YOU...

FSHHH
WOULD YOU MIND...
...STAYING AWAY FROM KAORUKO?
I'D PREFER IF PEOPLE FROM CHIDORI NOT GET TOO CLOSE TO HER.
SHE'S SUDDENLY EVEN MORE INTIMIDATING...!
I DIDN'T ASK FOR THAT...
I'LL PROTECT YOU, KAORUKO.
NO NEED TO WORRY.
GRIP
HOLD ON A SECOND, SUBARU!

HEEEY, RINTARO!
!

THIS...
OH NO, MORE IDIOTS...

YIKES.
THAT UNIFORM...
... WHAT THE?!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, YOU LOST OUR TABLE...?

...IS A NIGHTMARE!!
HEY, ARE YOU FROM KIKYO?
SILVER HAIR...
WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH RINTARO?
I DOUBT HE'D JUST START TALKING TO TWO KIKYO GIRLS.
WAP
SU-BARU!
USA-MI...
LET'S GO, KAORU-KO.
THERE'S NO NEED TO WASTE YOUR TIME ON THESE SAVAGES.
WHO'S A SAVAGE, HUH?
!
...!
WAIT, HAVEN'T I SEEN YOU SOMEWHERE BEFORE...?
LEAN
!

SHOVE
STAY AWAY FROM KAORUKO!

MY BAD...
TH-THE HELL?! I WASN'T GONNA DO ANYTHING!
FSH
MY BODY...

HUH?!
...

HEY, HEY, HEY!
THIS IS WHY I WANTED YOU TO STAY AWAY FROM CHIDORI BOYS.
H-HEY, SUBARU!
...
WHY? ALL HE DID WAS GET A LITTLE CLOSE...
...JUST MOVED ON ITS OWN...
DID YOU ALREADY FORGET THE QUESTION WE ASKED YOU?
WHY DON'T YOU USE YOUR BRAIN? RIGHT. YOU DON'T SEEM TO HAVE ONE.
WHO KNOWS?
FOGGLE
COLOR ME SURPRISED... FOLKS FROM KIKYO CAN BE SLOW-WITTED, AFTER ALL.
ARE YOU ALSO REFERRING TO KAORUKO?
WHEN YOU SAY, "FROM KIKYO" ...
MUST BE NICE, BEING A RICH LITTLE PRINCESS.
HEY.
THAT'S ...!
I GUESS THEY'LL LET YOU GET AWAY WITH ANYTHING, HUH?
KIKYO JUST ALLOWS YOU TO DYE IT?
AND WHAT'S WITH THAT HAIR?

YOU'RE NORMALLY NOT THE KINDA GUY TO SPEW ALL THESE LAME INSULTS, RIGHT?
Fwip
...

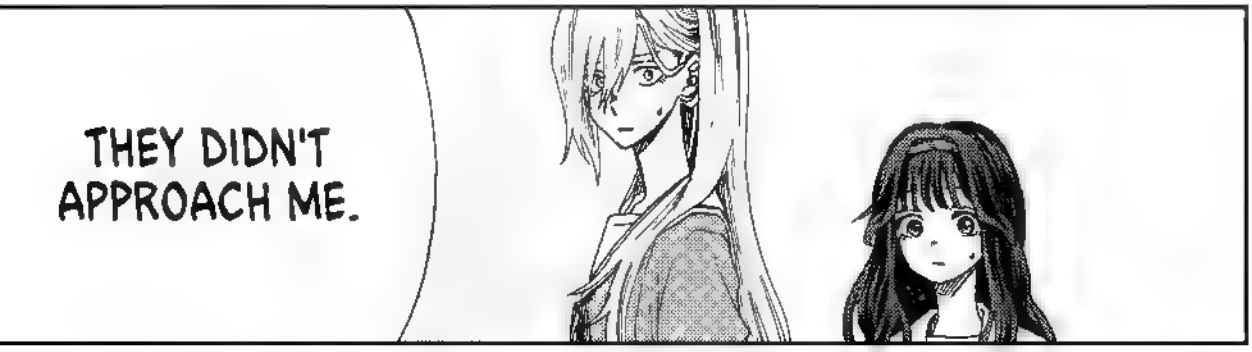
THAT'S CROSSING THE LINE...
...NATSU-SAWA.

...WHO WAS STANDING AT THE FRONT GATE THE OTHER DAY.
!
SHE'S THE ONE...
YOU REMEMBER HER, RIGHT?

...

...SO I WANTED TO APOLOGIZE FOR SCARING HER THAT TIME.
I HAPPENED TO SPOT HER IN THE LIBRARY...
AHH, NOW I REMEM-BER!

I SPOKE TO HER.
THAT'S WHY WE WERE TOGETHER.

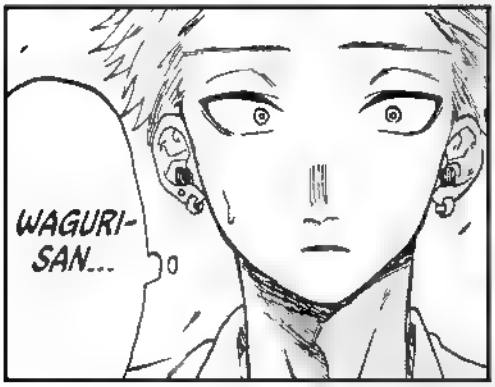

THEY DIDN'T APPROACH ME.

OKAY!
...
WSH
WH-WHAT NOW?
WAP

AND WEREN'T YOU THE ONE WHO SCARED HER?
ACK!
WHISPER
SO THAT'S WHAT HAP-PENED ...

I'M SORRY!
CLAP
ぱんっ
?!
AT THE TIME, I JUST TOTALLY LOST MY COOL.
I WAS BLIND TO EVERY-THING ELSE AROUND ME...
EVEN IF YOU'RE FROM KIKYO...
...I SHOULDN'T HAVE TREATED YOU THAT WAY.
I'M REALLY SORRY!
LIKEWISE.
I'M SORRY, TOO.
HUH? WHAT?!
...
FWIP
KA...

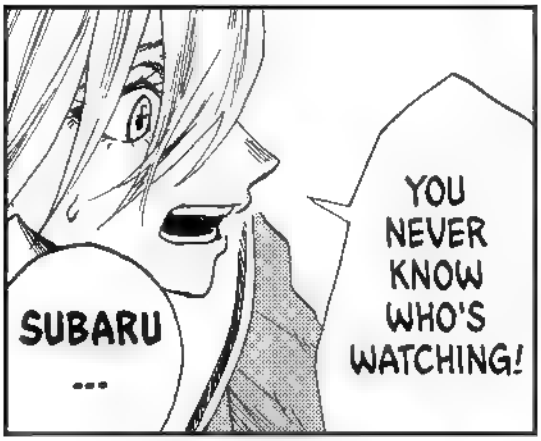
KAORUKO ...?!


WAGURI-SAN...

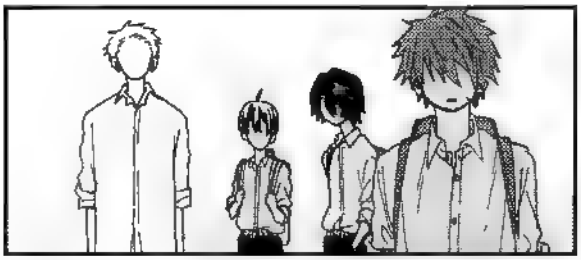
A GIRL FROM KIKYO...
...APOL-OGIZED TO US?

I MADE EVERYONE FEEL UNCOM-FORTABLE...
I WAS THE ONE WHO CAUSED ALL THAT CHAOS.

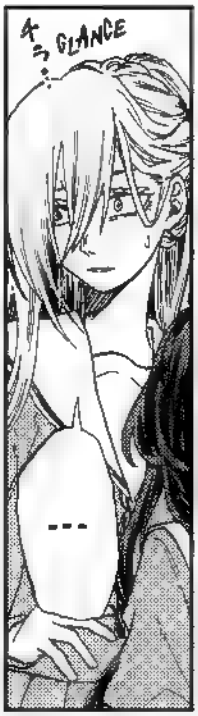
I'M SORRY.
...AND I'VE REALLY WANTED TO APOLOGIZE FOR THAT.


SUBARU ...
YOU NEVER KNOW WHO'S WATCHING!

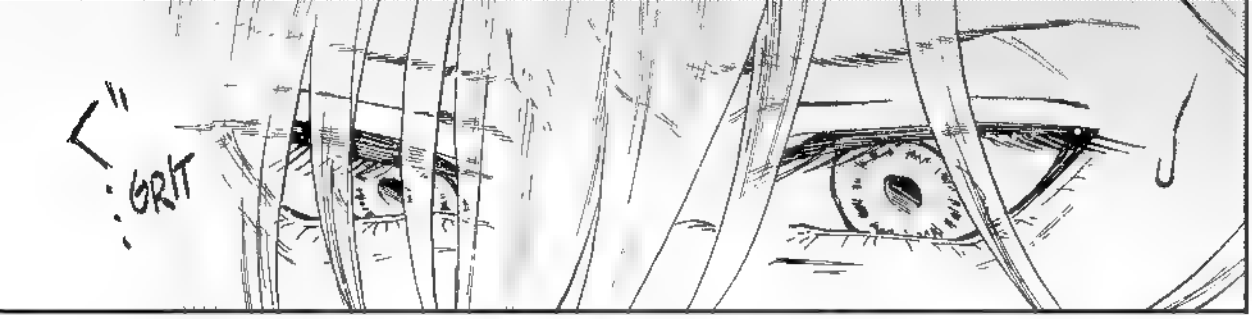
STOP THAT!
K-KAORU-KO!
BAM



...?

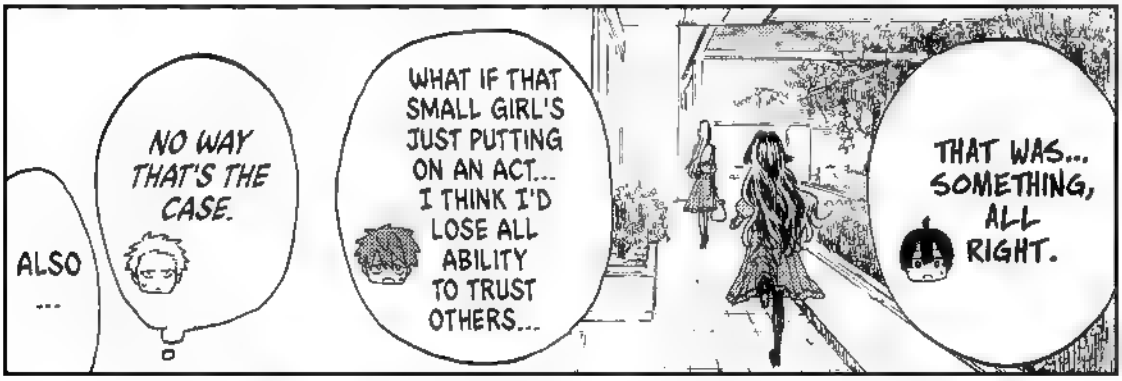

GLANCE
...

YOU TOO.


GRIT

D-DON'T MIND US?
I'M SORRY, I SHOULD GO, TOO!
BOW
BOW

I'M GOING BACK.
TWIRL
SUBARU!


ALSO ...
NO WAY THAT'S THE CASE.
WHAT IF THAT SMALL GIRL'S JUST PUTTING ON AN ACT... I THINK I'D LOSE ALL ABILITY TO TRUST OTHERS...
THAT WAS... SOMETHING, ALL RIGHT.

REEEALLY NOW, SAKU-CHAAAN?
OH WELL, I'M SURE HE DID IT FOR OUR SAKE. RIGHT?

...
FWIP
PRETTY SURE WE'VE ALSO GOT SOMEONE WHO HASN'T APOLO-GIZED...

...AND HERE THEY GO AGAIN.
THEY'LL MAKE UP SOON ENOUGH.
YELL!
YELL!
YELL!

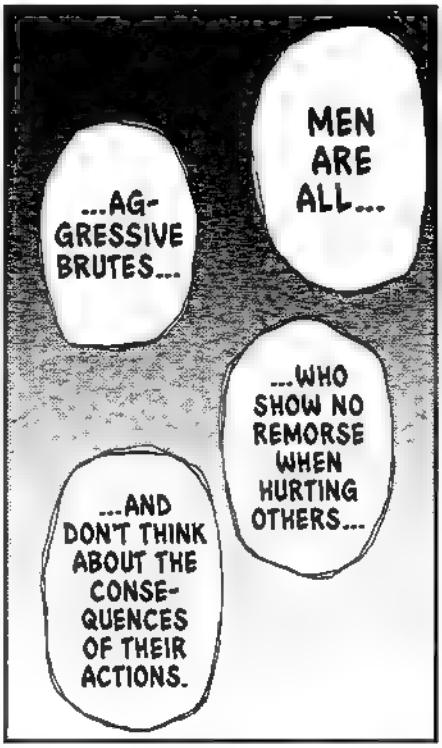
CAN'T YOU BE HONEST FOR ONCE?
IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT, BECAUSE YOU LET THEM RIDICULE YOU!

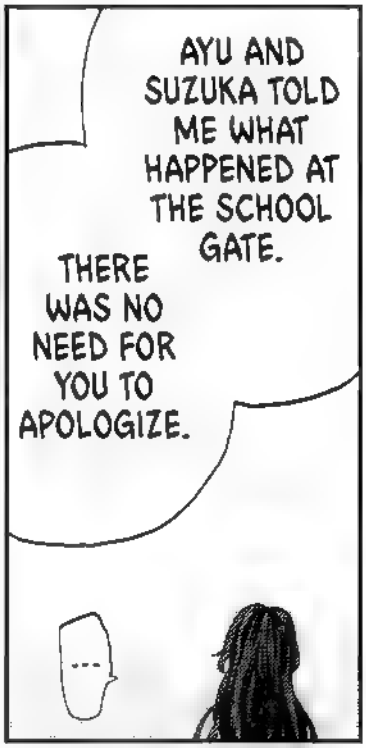
THAT SILVER-HAIRED GIRL...
LET'S EAT SNACKS WHILE WE STUDY! WHADDAYA SAY, SAKU-CHAN?
I SAY A FAMILY RESTAU-RANT!
WHAT ARE WE GONNA DO NOW, THOUGH? STUDY AT THE LIBRARY?
SMAK!
SMAK!
...

YOU CAN'T DO THAT.
OH, GEEZ, SUBARU...
WHY DID SHE LOOK AT ME RIGHT AT THE END?

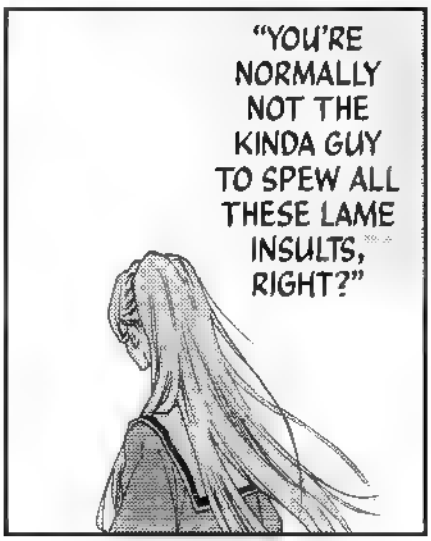
WHY WOULD YOU SAY THAT TO THEM...?
AND KAORUKO ...
I KNOW THAT YOU HAVE TROUBLE DEALING WITH BOYS, BUT EVEN SO...
MEN ARE ALL THE SAME.

CLENCH
CHIDORI'S FULL OF THOSE IDIOTS...
... AND I CAN'T HELP BUT HATE THEM.
"THAT'S CROSSING THE LINE, NATSUSAWA."


MEN ARE ALL...
...AG-GRESSIVE BRUTES...
...WHO SHOW NO REMORSE WHEN HURTING OTHERS...
...AND DON'T THINK ABOUT THE CONSE-QUENCES OF THEIR ACTIONS.


AYU AND SUZUKA TOLD ME WHAT HAPPENED AT THE SCHOOL GATE.
THERE WAS NO NEED FOR YOU TO APOLOGIZE.
...

SAY, KAORUKO ...
YEAH?
YOU TALKED WITH THAT... BLONDE BOY, RIGHT?
WHAT KIND OF PERSON... IS HE?
HIM?!
UM...


"YOU'RE NORMALLY NOT THE KINDA GUY TO SPEW ALL THESE LAME INSULTS, RIGHT?"

A VERY KIND PERSON...

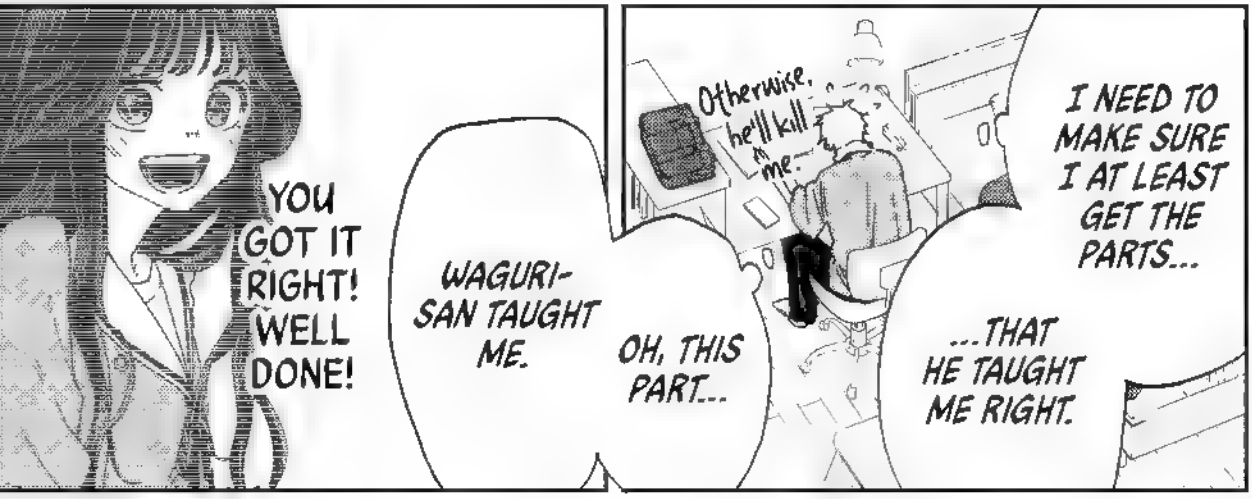
...SUBARU?
...I DON'T THINK THEY'RE BAD PEOPLE, EITHER.
AND THE OTHERS WITH HIM...
I CAN GUARANTEE THAT.

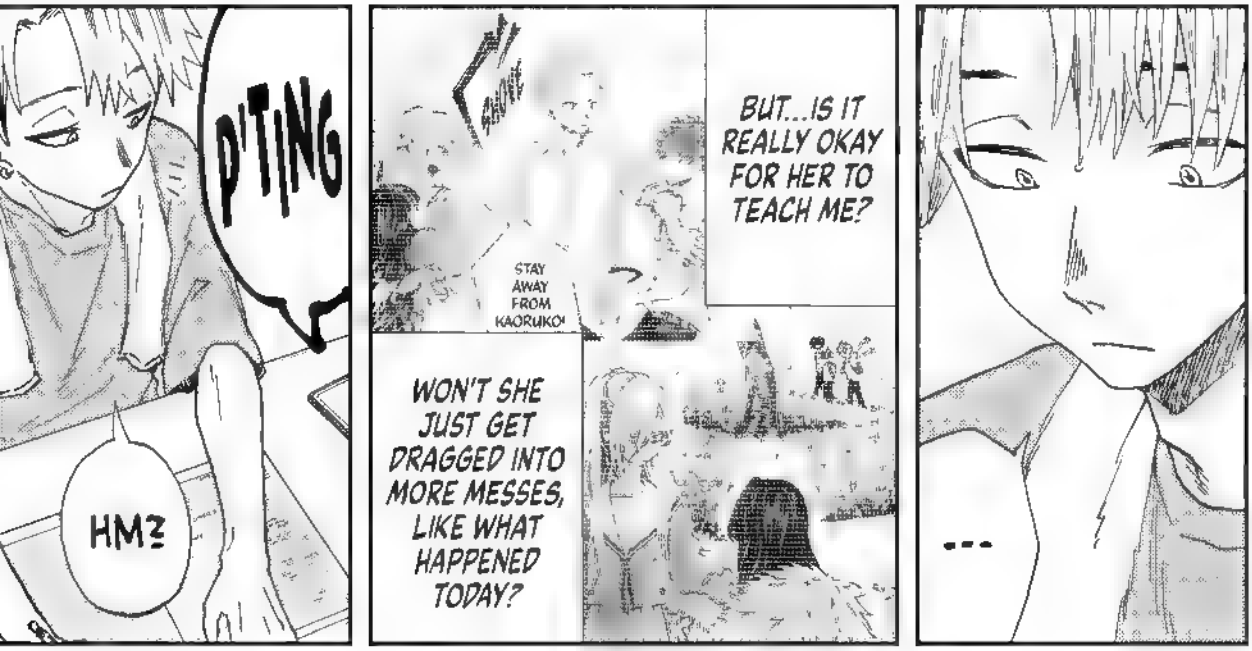
...
I'VE BEEN AT IT FOR A WHILE NOW...

BUT THERE'S NO EATING HERE, REMEMBER?
...AH.

AH! OH, I'M SORRY...
HEY, SUBARU!
BY THE WAY, WHAT'S WITH ALL THESE SWEETS YOU BOUGHT?
I FIGURED WE COULD EAT THEM WHILE WE STUDY.
...

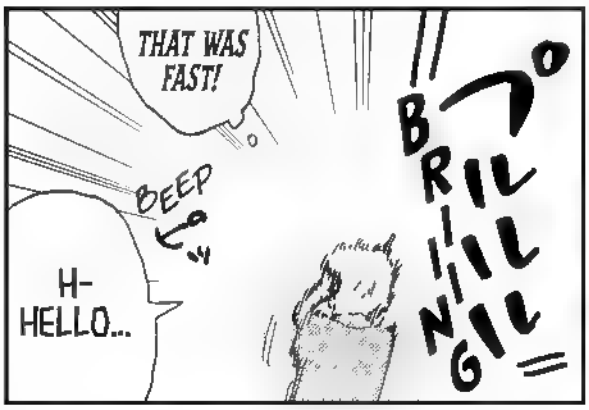
WHY?! NATSUSAWA HELPED ME SO MUCH, AND YET...
At the family restaurant
...did you even get that answer?
How in the world...
BUT I KEEP MAKING THE SAME MISTAKES OVER AND OVER!


YOU GOT IT RIGHT! WELL DONE!
WAGURI-SAN TAUGHT ME.
OH, THIS PART...
Otherwise, he'll kill me—
I NEED TO MAKE SURE I AT LEAST GET THE PARTS...
...THAT HE TAUGHT ME RIGHT.


P'TING
HM?
STAY AWAY FROM KAORUKO!
BUT...IS IT REALLY OKAY FOR HER TO TEACH ME?
WON'T SHE JUST GET DRAGGED INTO MORE MESSES, LIKE WHAT HAPPENED TODAY?
...

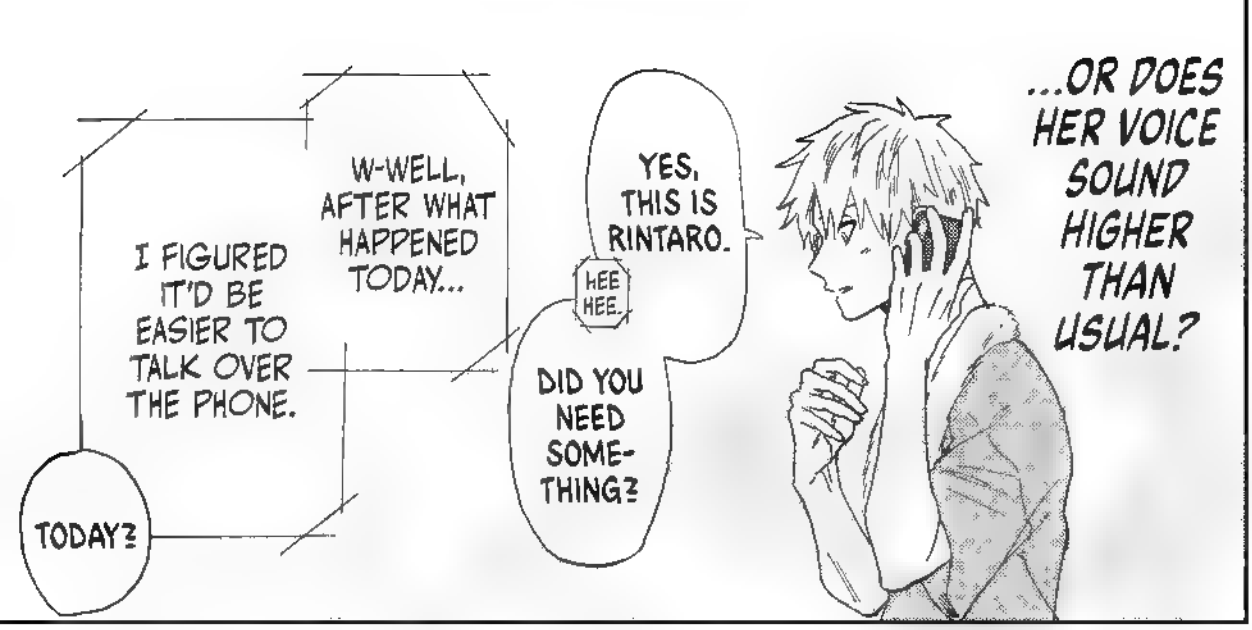
DID I FORGET SOME-THING?
PANIC
WH-WHAT?! WHAT'S SHE WANT?!
Sure.
THE 2HOOP
PANIC

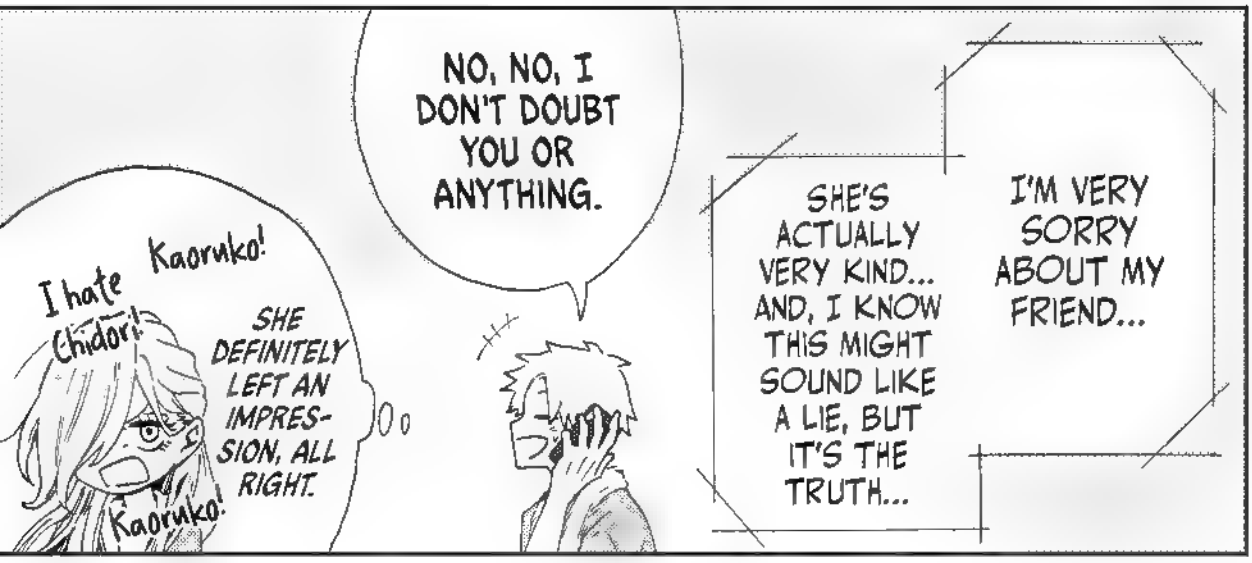
WHAAA?!
Kaoruko Waguri
I'm sorry for the abrupt message.
Would it be possible to talk a bit?


THAT WAS FAST!
BEEP
H-HELLO...
BRILLING

HEH
IS IT JUST ME...

UM...
IT'S KAORUKO.
AH, RINTARO-KUN?


TODAY?
I FIGURED IT'D BE EASIER TO TALK OVER THE PHONE.
W-WELL, AFTER WHAT HAPPENED TODAY...
YES, THIS IS RINTARO.
HEE HEE.
DID YOU NEED SOME-THING?
...OR DOES HER VOICE SOUND HIGHER THAN USUAL?


I hate Chidori!
Kaoruko!
SHE DEFINITELY LEFT AN IMPRES-SION, ALL RIGHT.
Kaoruko!
NO, NO, I DON'T DOUBT YOU OR ANYTHING.
SHE'S ACTUALLY VERY KIND... AND, I KNOW THIS MIGHT SOUND LIKE A LIE, BUT IT'S THE TRUTH...
I'M VERY SORRY ABOUT MY FRIEND...

DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. I ALREADY FORGOT THAT PART.
Oh, right.
I'M SORRY YOU HAD TO LIE FOR OUR SAKE...EVEN THOUGH I WAS THE ONE WHO CAUSED IT ALL.
HAHA... YOU REALLY ARE SO THOUGHT-FUL.
I DON'T BLAME THEM, AFTER WHAT SUBARU SAID.
IF ANYTHING, I SHOULD APOLOGIZE FOR MY FRIENDS, TOO. THEY GET RILED UP FAR TOO EASILY...
SO, UM...
KPEAK

...IF I SHOULD BE SAYING THIS AFTER YOU'VE PROTECTED ME...
I DON'T KNOW...

BUT THAT WAS VERY COOL OF YOU, RINTARO-KUN.
!
...THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

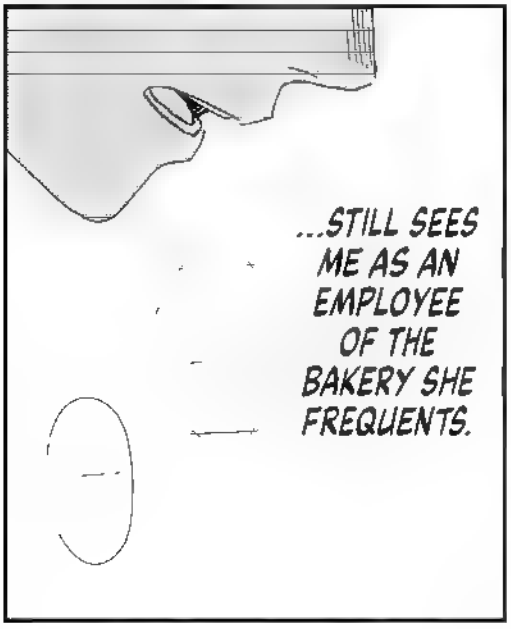
COOL...

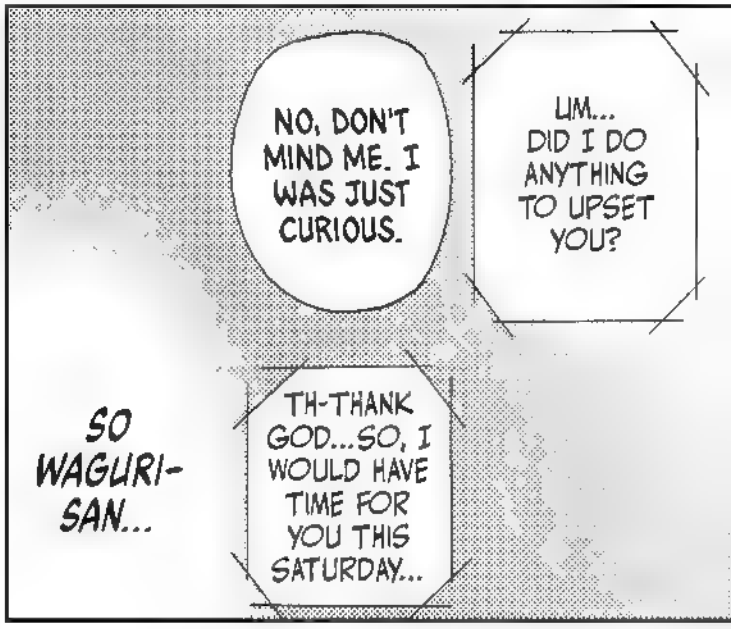
NOBODY'S EVER CALLED ME THAT BEFORE...
LIKE I THOUGHT...
SOMETHING'S WEIRD WITH ME LATELY.

WAGURI-SAN'S FACE JUST INVADING MY THOUGHTS...
FEELING HAPPY OR BEWILDERED AT HER WORDS AND ACTIONS...
AND TODAY, TOO...
...LO?
HELLO?
AH, YES! I'M HERE!
OH, GOOD... ANYWAY, WE TALKED ABOUT MEETING UP TO STUDY TOGETHER, RIGHT?
AND, UM...
WHAT'S WRONG?
IT'S JUST... LATELY, I'VE BEEN A LOT MORE FRANK WITH YOU...
I'M SORRY. I'LL TRY TO BE MORE POLITE FROM NOW ON.
...
OH, YEAH.
IT'S BEEN LIKE THIS THE WHOLE TIME.

B-BECAUSE... I'M JUST A CUSTOMER AT YOUR FAMILY'S PATISSERIE.
SPEAKING WITH YOU LIKE WE'VE KNOWN EACH OTHER FOR YEARS IS A BIT...

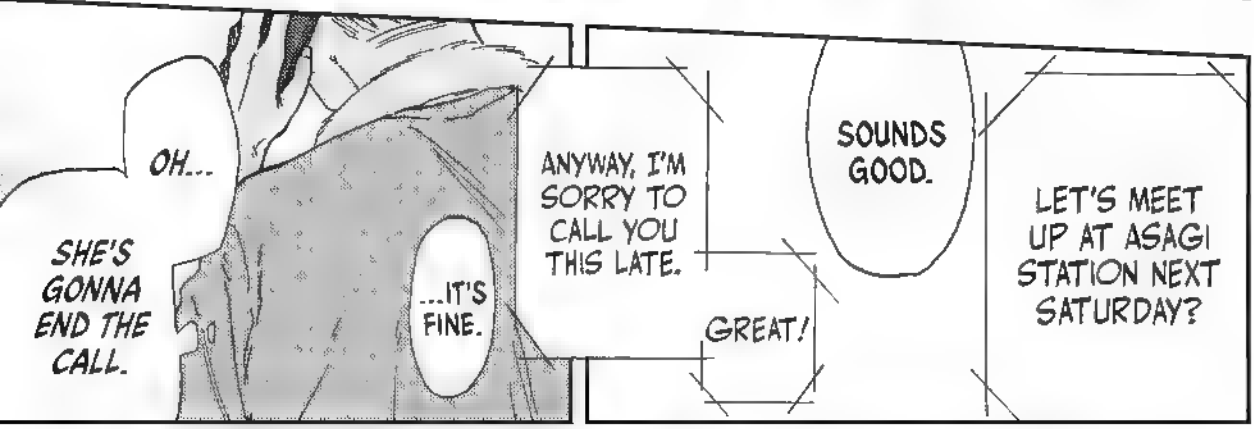
WHY?
WHY ARE YOU SO POLITE TOWARDS ME?
HUH?!


...STILL SEES ME AS AN EMPLOYEE OF THE BAKERY SHE FREQUENTS.


NO, DON'T MIND ME. I WAS JUST CURIOUS.
UM... DID I DO ANYTHING TO UPSET YOU?
SO WAGURI-SAN...
TH-THANK GOD...SO, I WOULD HAVE TIME FOR YOU THIS SATURDAY...

HERE I WAS... AND...
...BUT NOW IT FEELS LIKE WE'RE SO FAR FROM EACH OTHER.
...I WAS NEVER TOO BOTHERED BY THIS BEFORE...
HON-ESTLY...

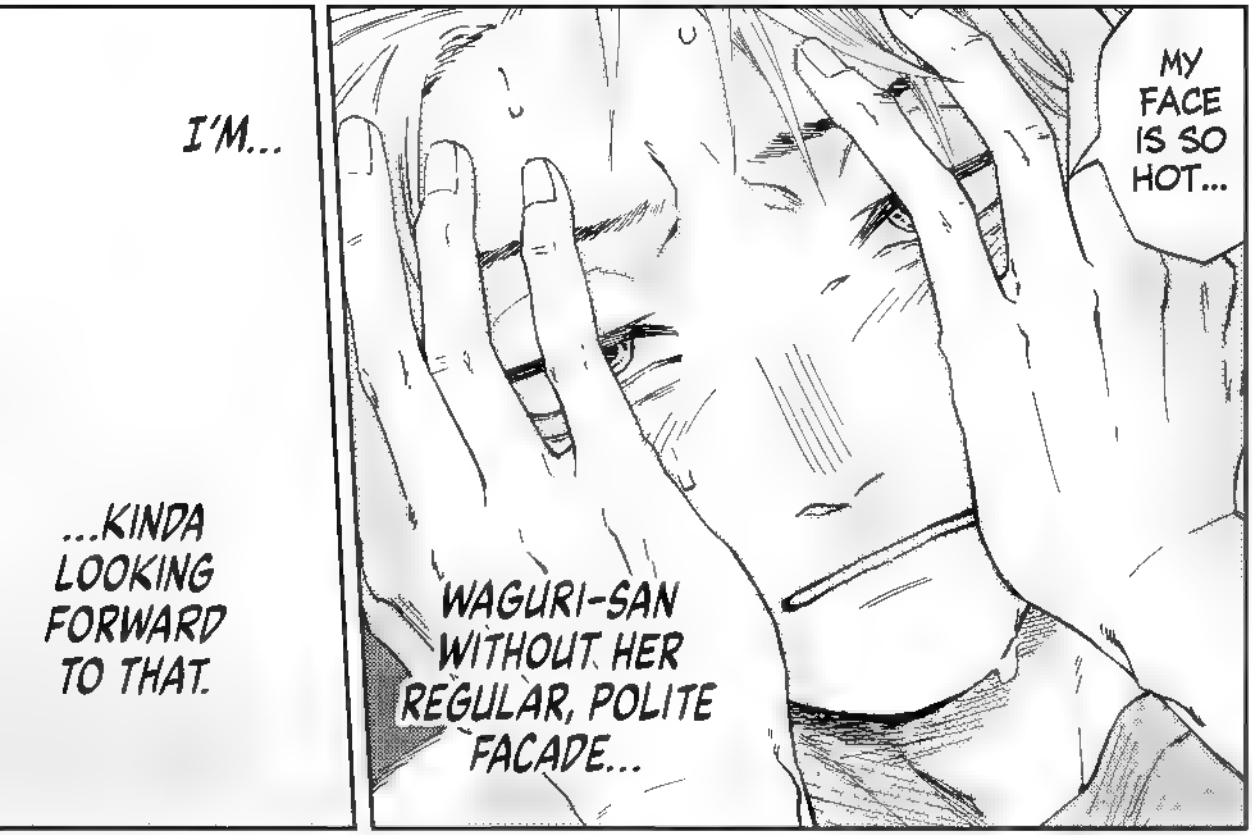
...THINKING WE'VE BEEN GETTING ALONG PRETTY WELL.
THEN...

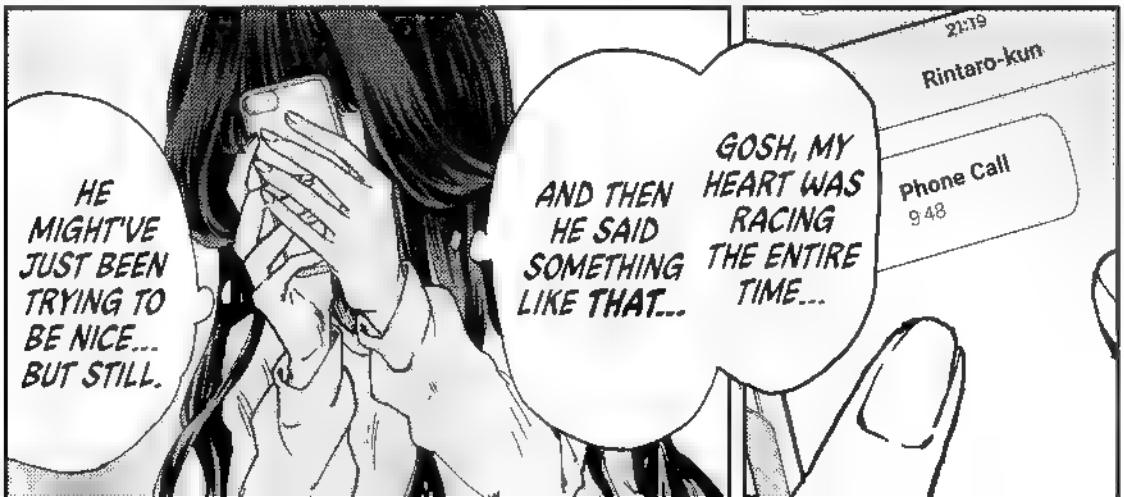

LET'S MEET UP AT ASAGI STATION NEXT SATURDAY?
SOUNDS GOOD.
GREAT!
ANYWAY, I'M SORRY TO CALL YOU THIS LATE.
...IT'S FINE.
OH...
SHE'S GONNA END THE CALL.

SHE MAY ALWAYS BE SMILING...
BUT...
...WHAT KIND OF FACE IS SHE MAKING RIGHT NOW WHILE TALKING ON THE PHONE WITH ME?
GOOD NIGHT!
AND I WONDER...
ACTU-ALLY!
...HUH?
YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THAT ANYMORE!
...WHAT KIND OF FACE SHE'LL MAKE...

...
THAT'S ALL I WANTED TO SAY.
...YEAH.
ARE YOU SURE?
NIGHT.
ANYWAY... GOOD NIGHT!
...OKAY! I'LL KEEP THAT IN MIND FOR NEXT TIME!
WHAT KIND OF FACE, HUH...
Phone Call
9:48
Aa
...WHEN SHE HEARS WHAT I'M ABOUT TO SAY.
I'D BE HAPPY...
...IF YOU'D JUST TALK TO ME LIKE YOU DO YOUR FRIENDS!

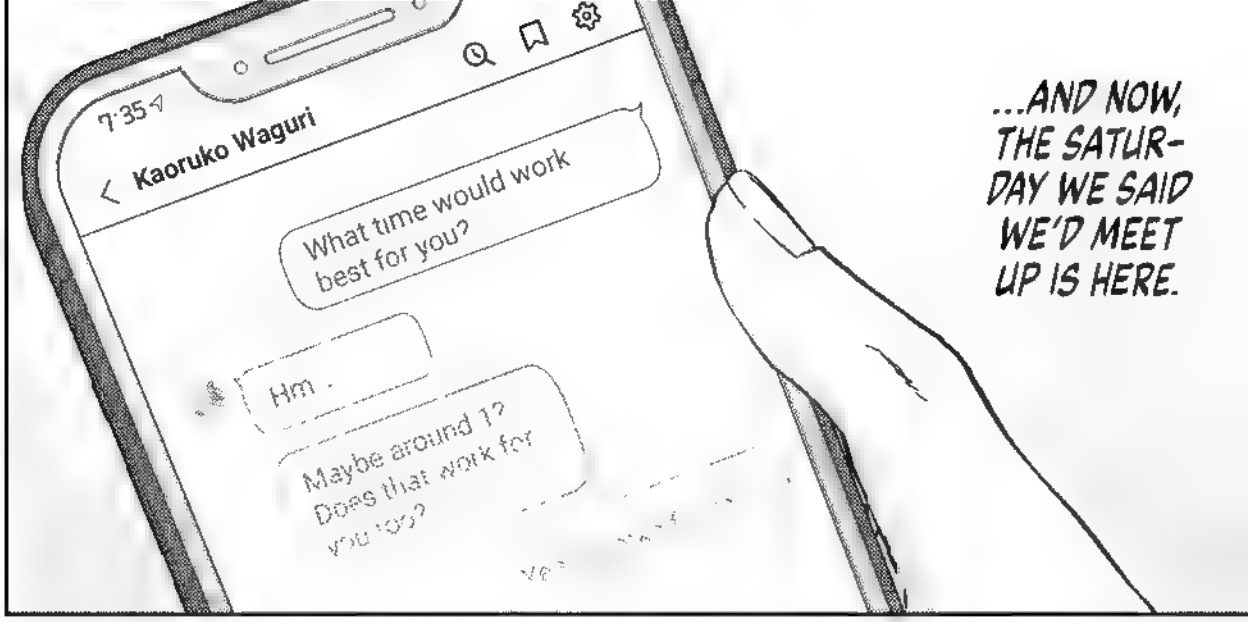
WHY'D I BLURT OUT SOMETHING EMBARRASSING LIKE THAT?!
I'M SUCH A MORON!
POMF
HOW THE HELL WOULD I KNOW?!


I'M...
...KINDA LOOKING FORWARD TO THAT.
WAGURI-SAN WITHOUT HER REGULAR, POLITE FACADE...
MY FACE IS SO HOT...

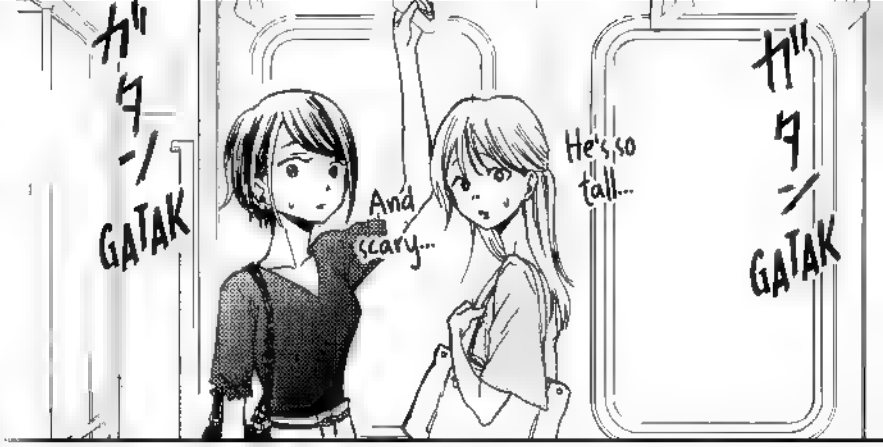

HE MIGHT'VE JUST BEEN TRYING TO BE NICE... BUT STILL.
AND THEN HE SAID SOMETHING LIKE THAT...
GOSH, MY HEART WAS RACING THE ENTIRE TIME...
21:19
Rintaro-kun
Phone Call
9:48

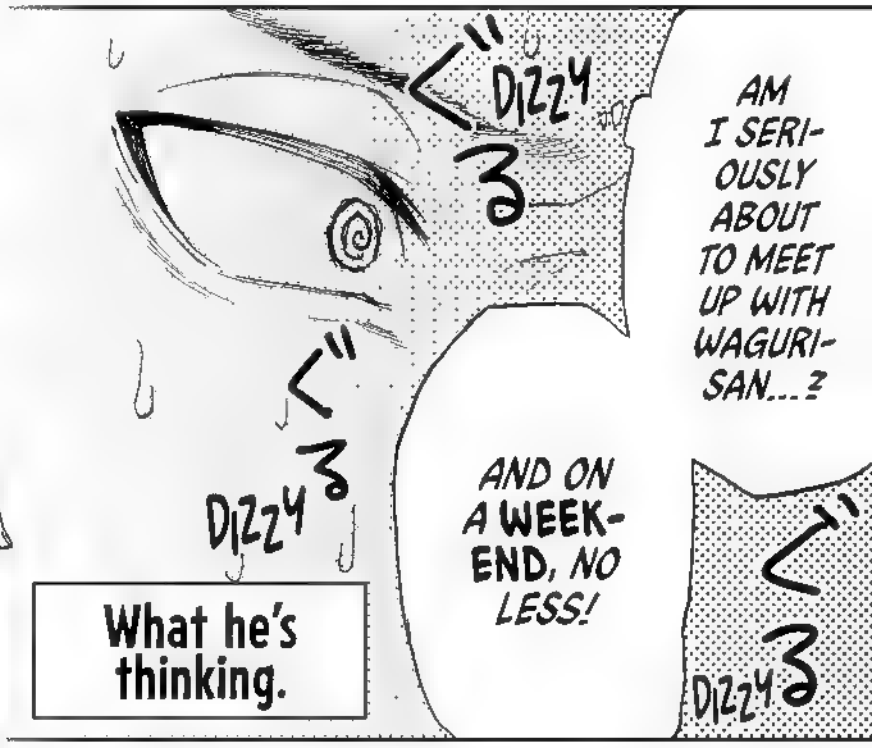
HOT...
THAT I WAS GRINNING THE WHOLE TIME, RIGHT?
HE DIDN'T REALIZE...
I CAN'T WAIT FOR NEXT SATURDAY.

Chapter 5: Study Session


7:35
Kaoruko Waguri
What time would work best for you?
Hm .
Maybe around 12 Does that work for you too?
...AND NOW, THE SATURDAY WE SAID WE'D MEET UP IS HERE.

SO BRIGHT...
TODAY IS THE DAY...
...WAGURI-SAN AND I WILL STUDY TOGETHER.
Plain
I'VE LOST COUNT OF HOW MANY TIMES...
...I'VE CHECKED THIS SAME SCREEN.


ガタン
GATAK
And scary...
He's so tall...
ガタン
GATAK


DIZZY
DIZZY
What he's thinking.
AM I SERIOUSLY ABOUT TO MEET UP WITH WAGURI-SAN...?
AND ON A WEEKEND, NO LESS!
DIZZY

I SHOULD BUY SOME NEW STUFF WHEN I GET THE TIME.
ALSO...
THESE ARE ABOUT THE ONLY CLOTHES I HAD TO WEAR TODAY...

GATAK

GATAK

THIS SAME SCENERY A MILLION TIMES...

I'VE SEEN...

...AND YET, IT FEELS LIKE I'M LOOKING AT A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT WORLD.

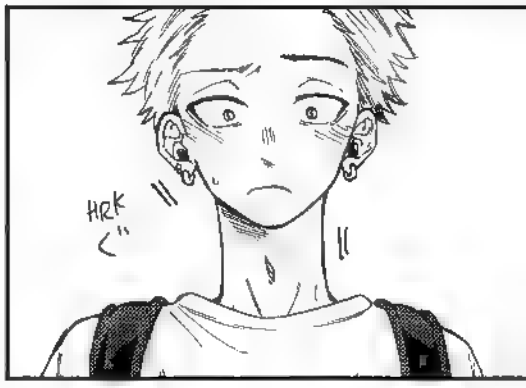
浅黄駅
Asagi Sta

IS SHE ALREADY...
HOLD ON...
BEEP
ピッ
!
GOT HERE TOO EARLY, HUH?
!

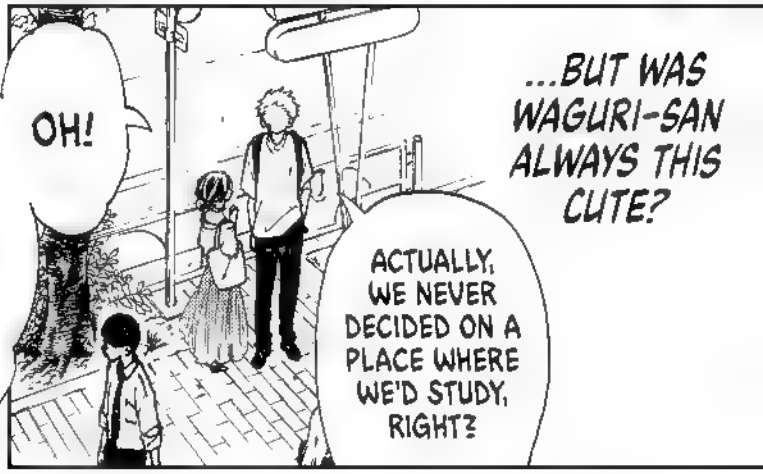
RINTARO-KUN!
BEEAAM
I JUST HAPPENED TO ARRIVE EARLY...
OOPS.
NOT AT ALL!
SORRY...
WERE YOU WAITING LONG?
TMP
BADUMP
...!
THAT WAS THE POLITE-NESS TALKING.
IT SURE WAS.
I GUESS I'M JUST NOT USED TO IT YET.
AND NOT TO MEN-TION...

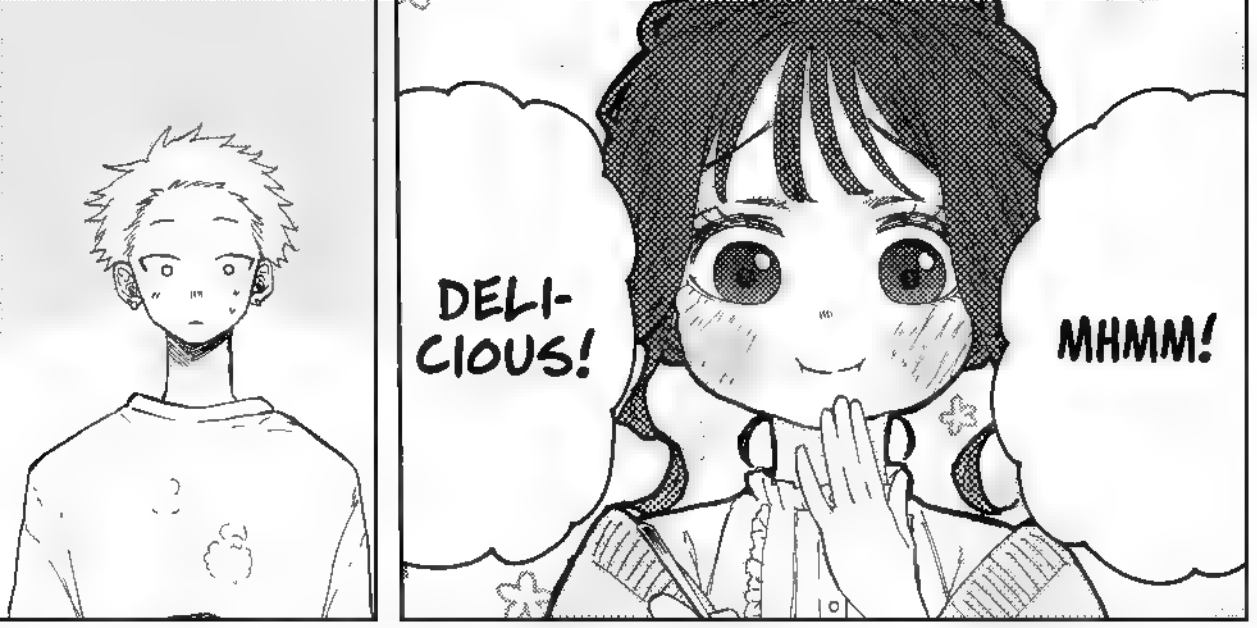
NOW THAT I'M HERE...
...I FEEL A BIT NERVOUS.

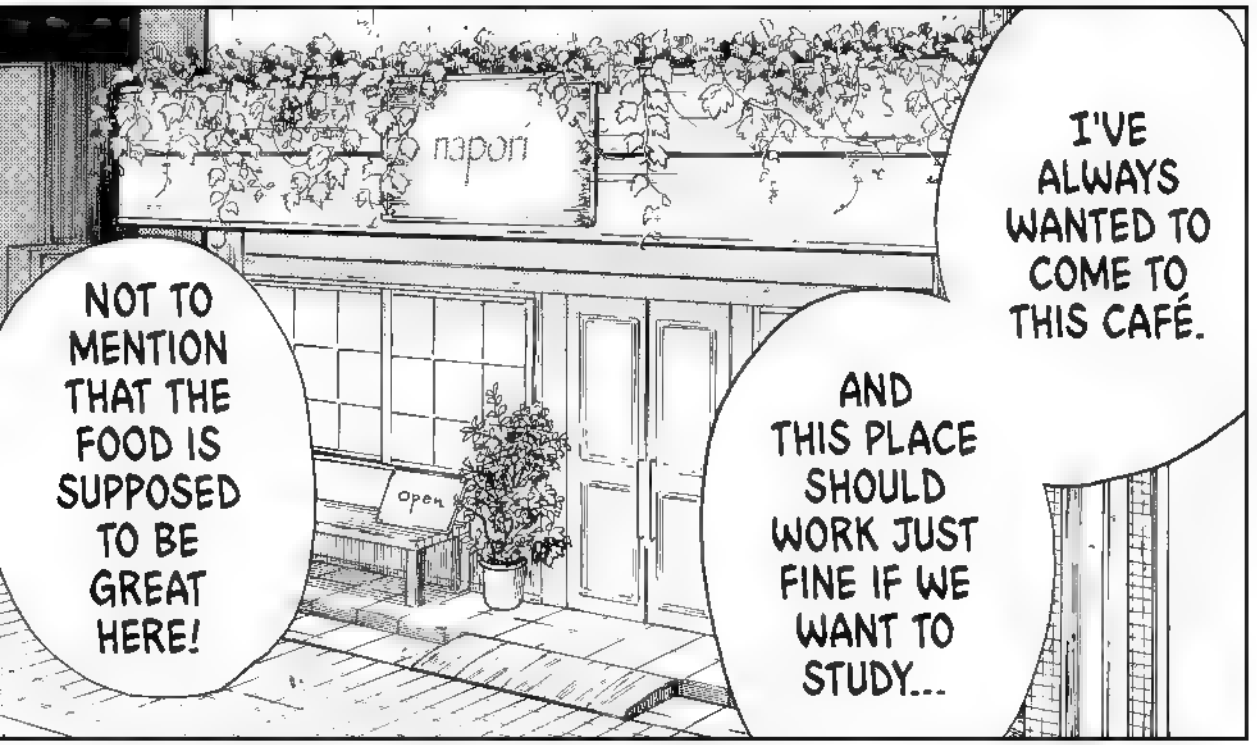
I'M NOT SURE...
PFFT
HEY, YOU'RE NOT MUCH BETTER!
...THAT'S TRUE.


HRK

THEN...
OH!

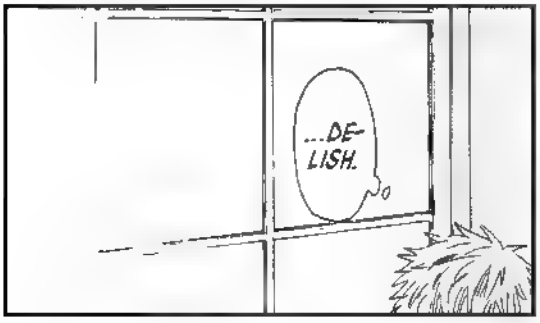

...BUT WAS WAGURI-SAN ALWAYS THIS CUTE?
ACTUALLY, WE NEVER DECIDED ON A PLACE WHERE WE'D STUDY, RIGHT?

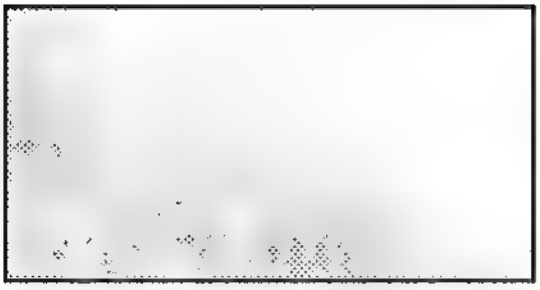

DELI-
CIOUS!
MHMM!

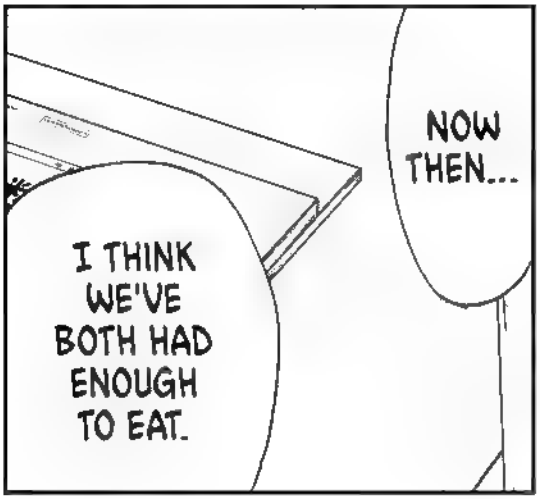

NOT TO MENTION THAT THE FOOD IS SUPPOSED TO BE GREAT HERE!
AND THIS PLACE SHOULD WORK JUST FINE IF WE WANT TO STUDY...
I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO COME TO THIS CAFÉ.
open

I WAS SO NERVOUS I TOTALLY FORGOT...
OH, RIGHT. I'LL TRY SOME.
WHAT'S WRONG?
YOUR FOOD WILL GET COLD.

NOW!
はぐ
SHE LOOKS THE HAPPI-EST...
...WHEN SHE'S EATING.


...DE-LISH.




NOW THEN...
I THINK WE'VE BOTH HAD ENOUGH TO EAT.

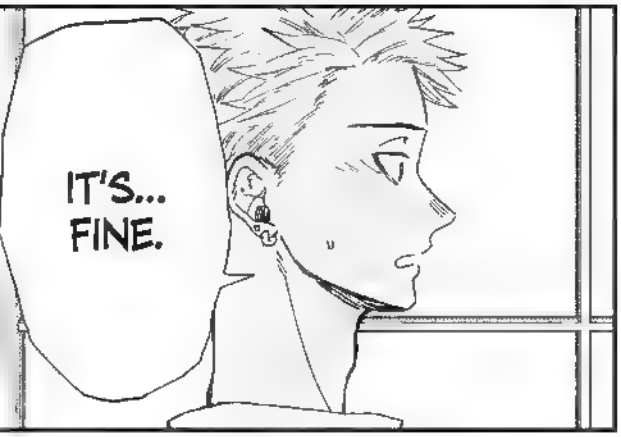
SHE REALLY LOVES...
...TO EAT, HUH?

YES, PLEASE!
LET'S GET STUDYING!

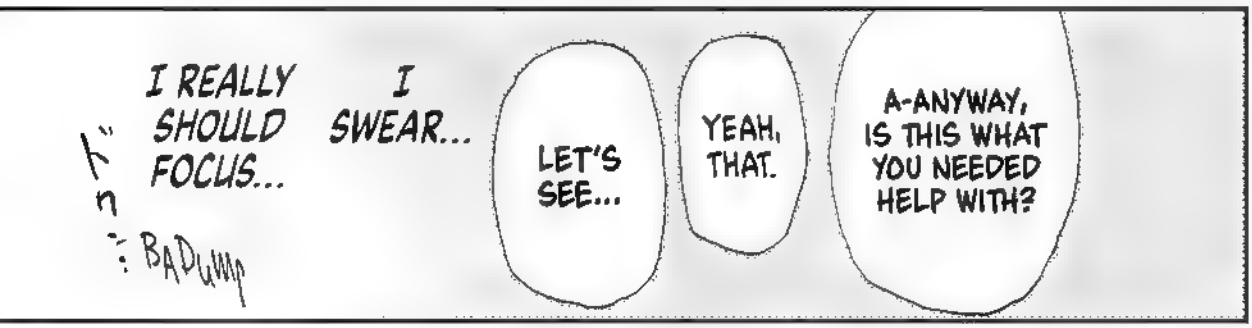
THEN, I'D LIKE TO START WITH THIS, RIGHT HERE...
Math
HAHA! JUST ASK ME IF YOU'RE UNSURE ABOUT SOMETHING.
I ASKED ABOUT THE MATERIAL YOUR EXAMS ARE GOING TO COVER...SO, SHOULD WE START WITH MATH?
YEAH. I SHOULD BE ABLE TO MANAGE EVERYTHING ELSE...SOMEHOW.

LEAN
WHICH PART?

FWOOM

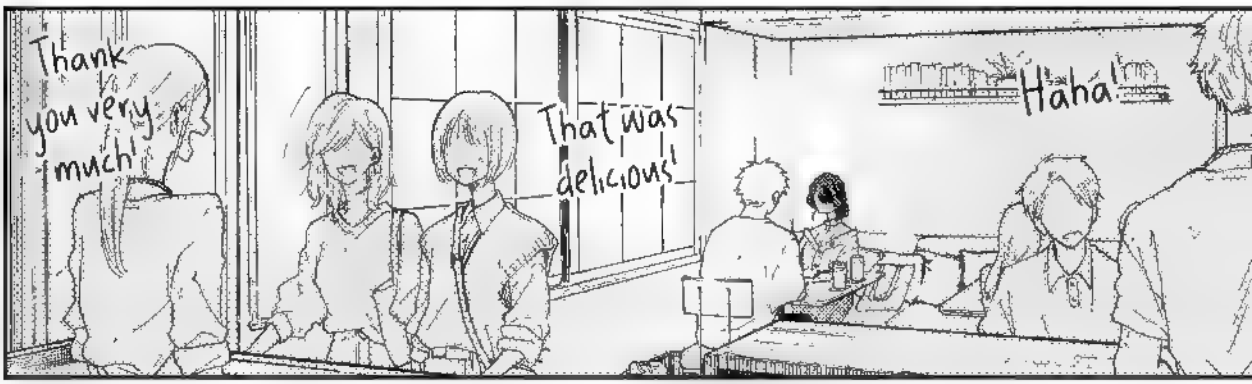

IT'S... FINE.

S-SORRY, I GOT TOO CLOSE...


I REALLY SHOULD FOCUS...
I SWEAR...
LET'S SEE...
YEAH, THAT.
A-ANYWAY, IS THIS WHAT YOU NEEDED HELP WITH?
BADUMP

...IS WAY TOO LOUD.
BADUMP
BADUMP

...BUT THE BEATING OF MY HEART...
BADUMP
BADUMP

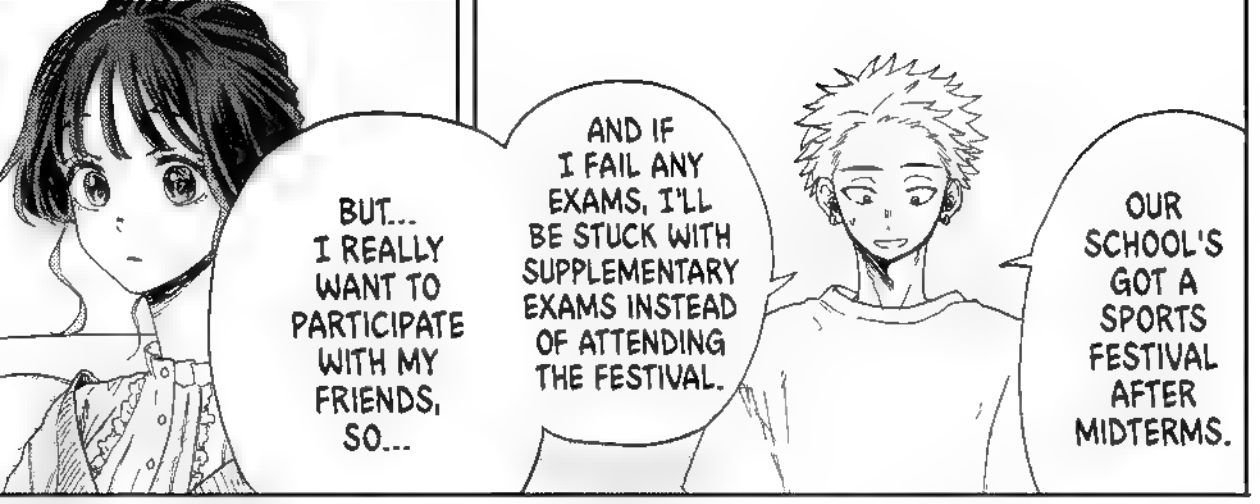

Thank you very much!
That was delicious!
Haha!

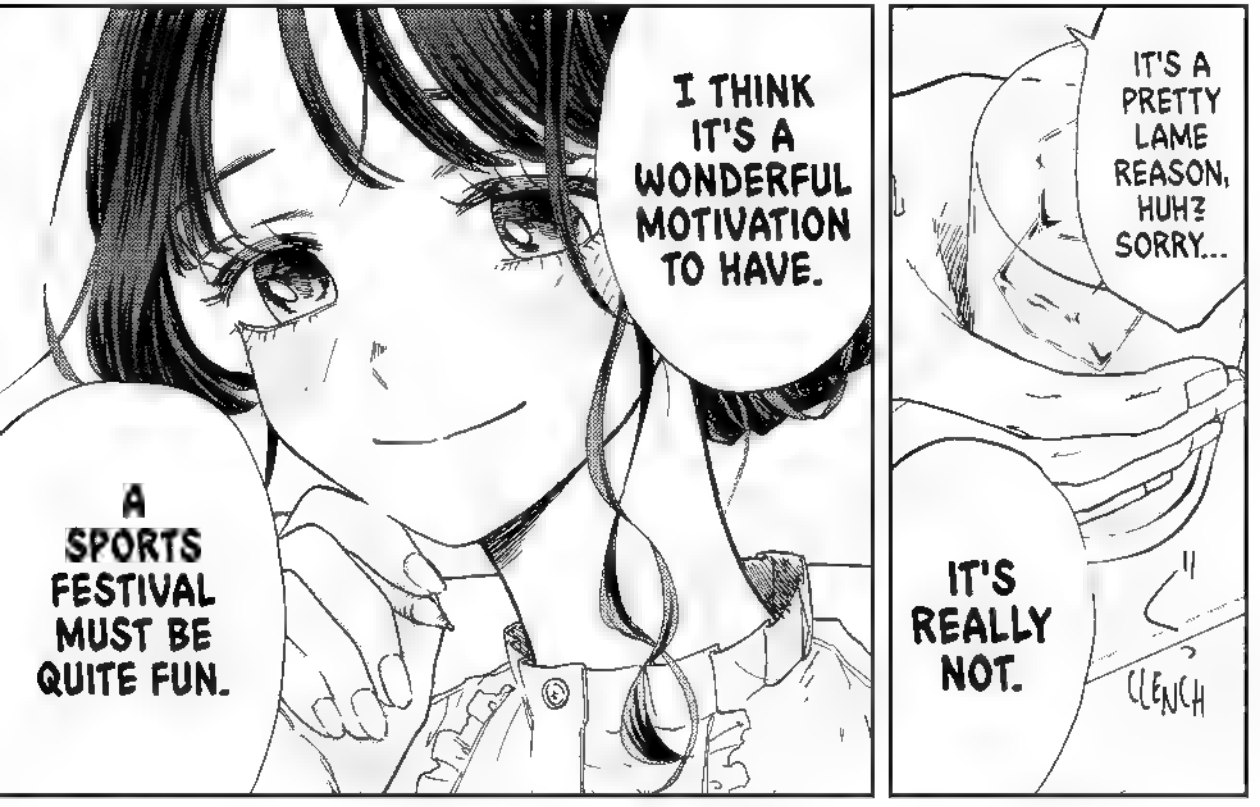
UM...

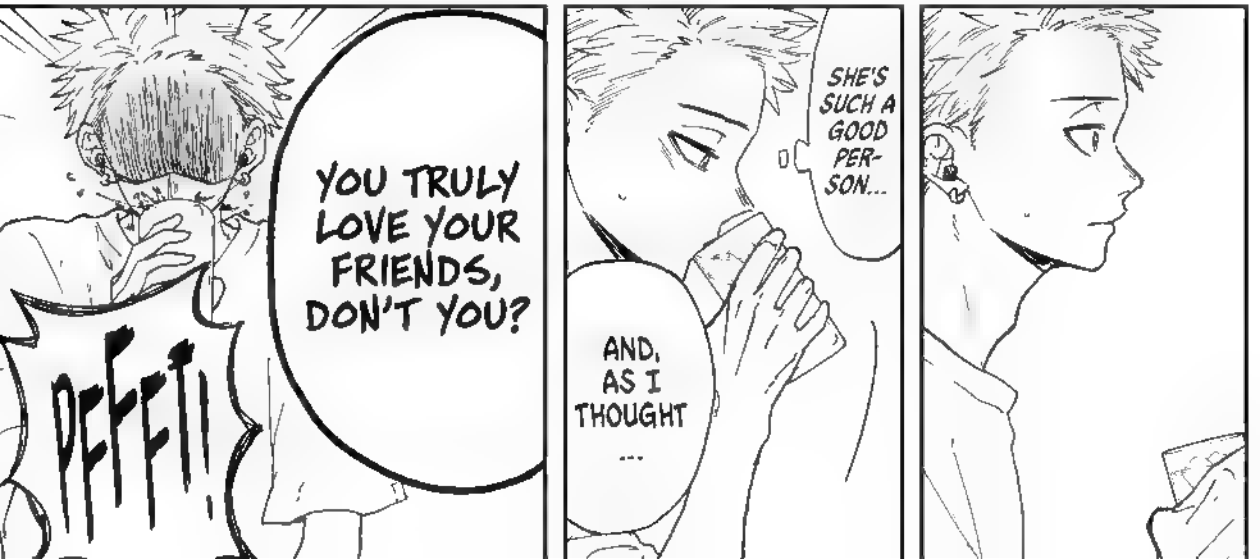
GLANCE
チラ…

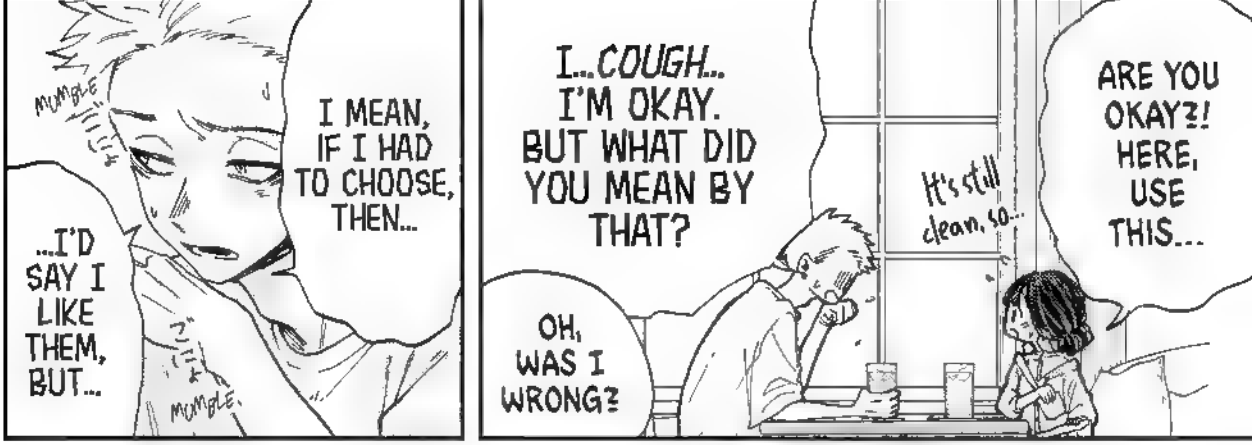
YOU MENTIONED YOU DIDN'T WANT TO FAIL THIS TIME, NO MATTER WHAT...
BUT WHY IS THAT?
!

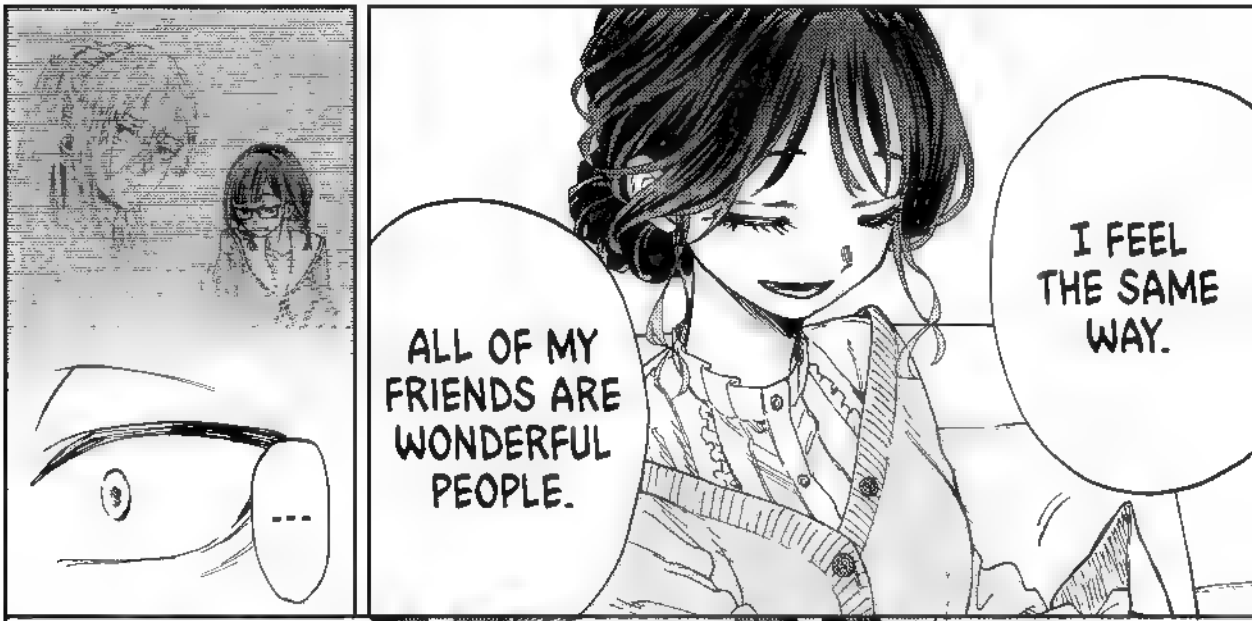
YEAH?
DO YOU MIND IF I ASK YOU SOMETHING?
FWIP
ばっ


OUR SCHOOL'S GOT A SPORTS FESTIVAL AFTER MIDTERMS.
AND IF I FAIL ANY EXAMS, I'LL BE STUCK WITH SUPPLEMENTARY EXAMS INSTEAD OF ATTENDING THE FESTIVAL.
BUT... I REALLY WANT TO PARTICIPATE WITH MY FRIENDS, SO...


I THINK IT'S A WONDERFUL MOTIVATION TO HAVE.
A SPORTS FESTIVAL MUST BE QUITE FUN.
IT'S A PRETTY LAME REASON, HUH? SORRY...
IT'S REALLY NOT.
CLENCH


YOU TRULY LOVE YOUR FRIENDS, DON'T YOU?
PEEET!
SHE'S SUCH A GOOD PER-SON...
AND, AS I THOUGHT ...

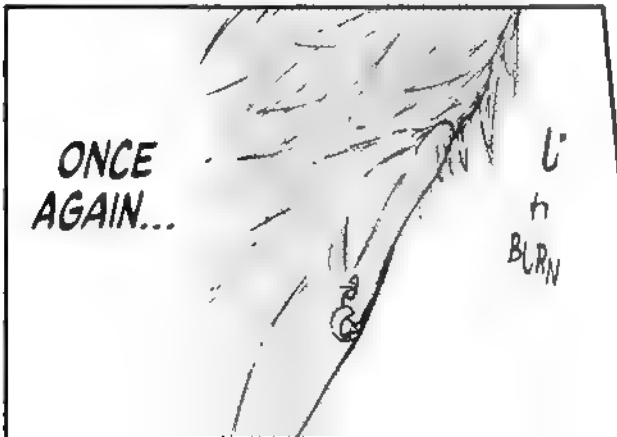

I MEAN, IF I HAD TO CHOOSE, THEN...
...I'D SAY I LIKE THEM, BUT...
mumble
mumble
I...COUGH... I'M OKAY. BUT WHAT DID YOU MEAN BY THAT?
OH, WAS I WRONG?
It's still clean, so...
ARE YOU OKAY?! HERE, USE THIS...


...
ALL OF MY FRIENDS ARE WONDERFUL PEOPLE.
I FEEL THE SAME WAY.

WE'VE BEEN TOGETHER SINCE WE WERE KIDS.
ESPECIALLY SUBARU...
SO SHE HAS TROUBLE DEALING WITH BOYS.
IT'S JUST THAT...A LOT HAPPENED WHEN SHE WAS YOUNG...
BUT SHE'S A KIND PERSON.
SHE OFTEN GETS MISUNDERSTOOD...

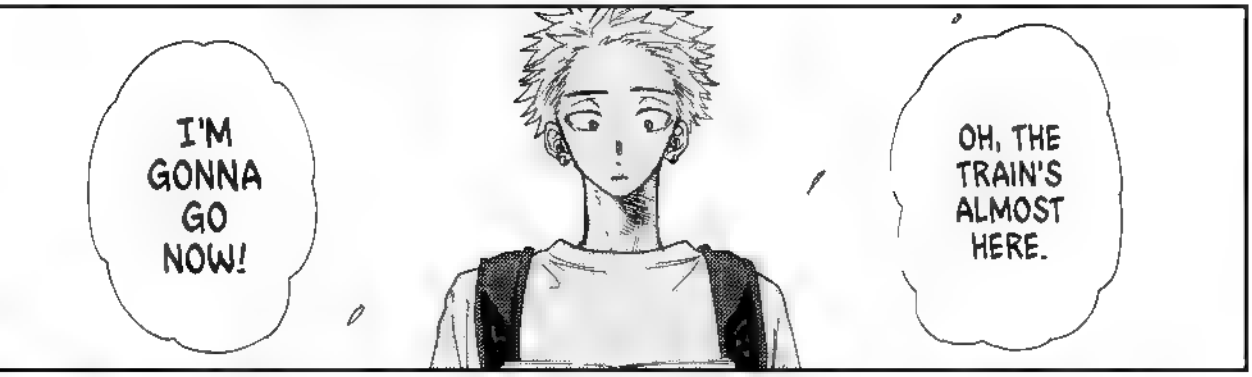
...I WAS VERY HAPPY ABOUT THAT.
NO, NO, I DON'T DOUBT YOU OR ANYTHING.
SHE'S ACTUALLY VERY KIND. AND, I KNO THIS MIGH SOUND LIK A LIE, BUT IT'S THE TRUTH...
THE FACT THAT YOU DIDN'T JUDGE HER FOR HER ACTIONS...
THAT'S WHY...
THANK YOU.

...YEAH.
ANYWAY, ENOUGH TALK! WE SHOULD GO BACK TO STUDYING!


ONCE AGAIN...

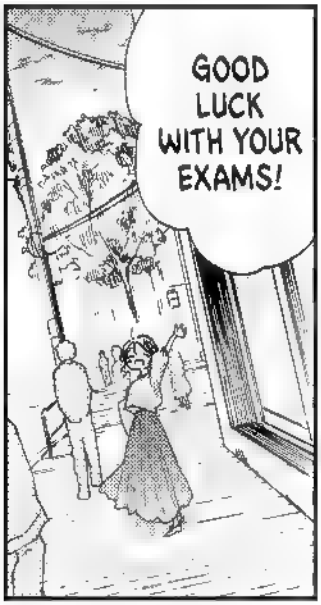
WE WORKED HARD TODAY!
MHM-MM!
...MAKE ME HAPPY.
HER WORDS...
NO PROB-LEM!
...OH, ALMOST FORGOT!
THANKS A LOT FOR TODAY. YOU REALLY HELPED SAVE MY HIDE.
MAKE SURE TO TAKE PROPER BREAKS IN BETWEEN, OKAY?
YEAH ...
THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME I'VE EVER SAT AT A DESK FOR THAT LONG...
TADA
HERE YOU GO!
IT'S FINE! I WAS THE ONE WHO SAID WE SHOULD BOTH DO OUR BEST.
ARE YOU SERIOUS?! WHAT ABOUT YOUR OWN STUDIES?!
BE-SIDES ...
How can I ever repay you?!
I STARE
I ORGANIZED THE IMPORTANT PARTS AND MADE YOU A STUDY PLAN.
?
FLAP
FLAP
SINCE YOU TOLD ME WHAT MIGHT BE IN YOUR EXAMS...

I WANT YOU TO HAVE LOTS OF FUN AT THE SPORTS FESTIVAL!
SO THAT YOU CAN TELL ME ALL SORTS OF STORIES.


I'M GONNA GO NOW!
OH, THE TRAIN'S ALMOST HERE.

All right!
GONNA DO SOME REVISION ON THE TRAIN!
3
TURN

WITH THIS MUCH HELP...
THERE'S NO WAY I CAN FAIL MY EXAMS.


GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR EXAMS!

WHOA?!
TUG

To be continued in volume 2

Character
Profile

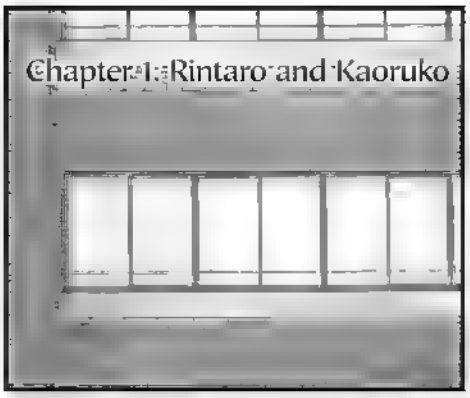
Kaoruko Wagori
Age: 16
Birthday: July 22nd
Blood type: B
Lovely Conversation
Father · Mother · Little Brother
Favorite food: Cake
Stew
Character Profile
Omake

!!
Fragrant Flower Blooms with Dignity
Special Illustration
Omake

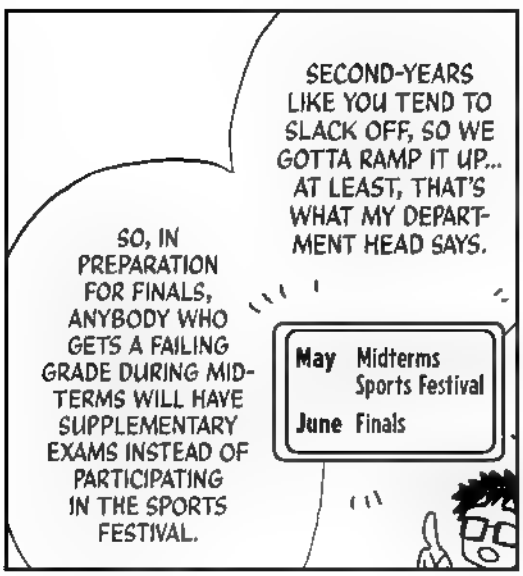
Translation Notes

Rintaro and Kaoruko

Our two main characters, Rintaro and Kaoruko, have interesting names. What is lost in translation here is the fact that the *rin* in Rintaro's name is written with the Japanese character 凛, which means "dignity." The same "dignity" that is part of the series title. Likewise, the *kaoru* in Kaoruko's name is written with the Japanese character 薫, meaning "fragrant." The same "fragrant" from the title!



Page 1



Page 115

Department Head

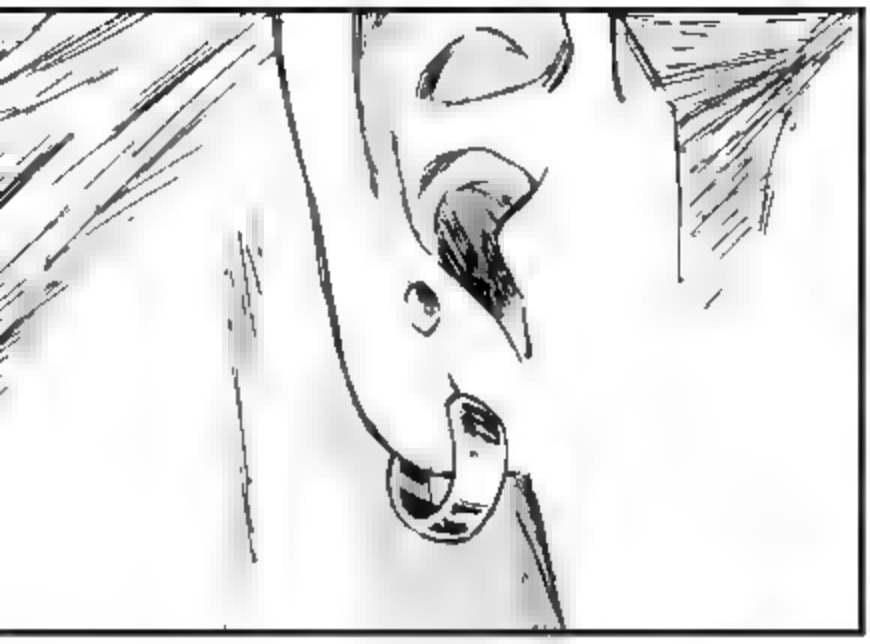
For anyone curious, the actual word here directly translates to "the head teacher of the year." In other words, there is a teacher in charge of each school grade at Chidori Boys' High School.

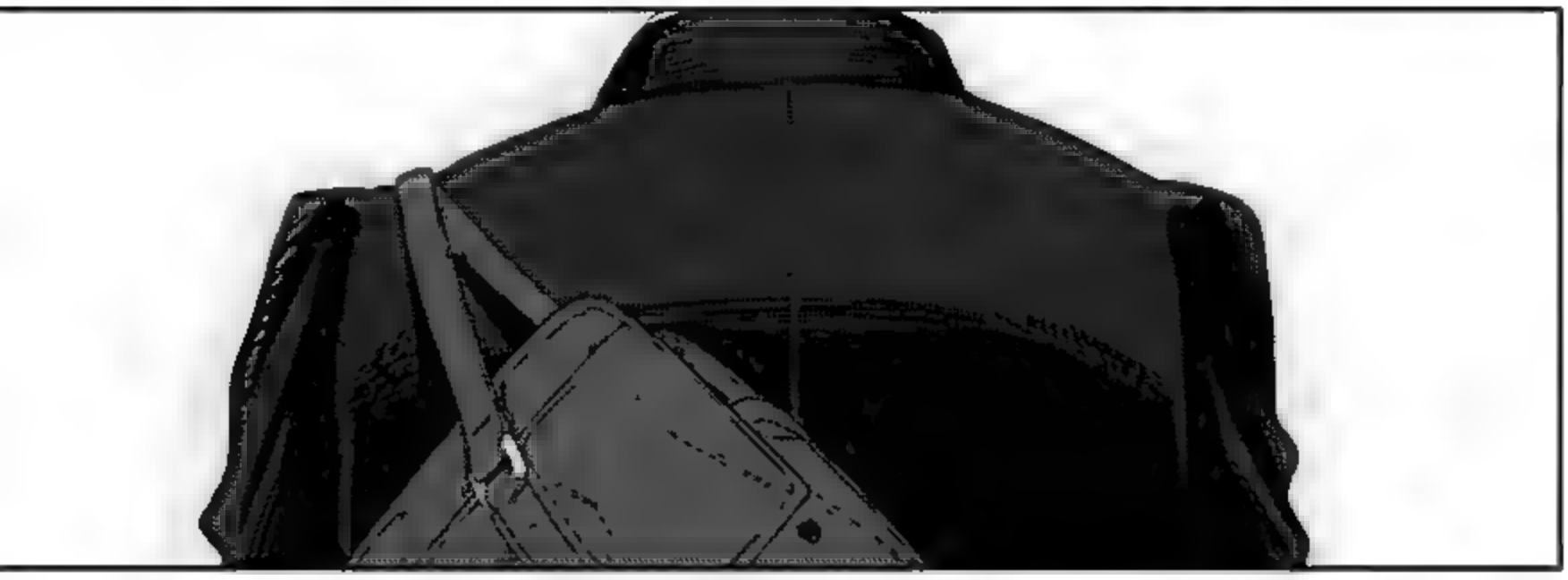
Why are you so polite?

Page 166

What Rintaro is specifically asking here, which is a little lost in translation, is why Kaoruko has been speaking to him this entire time using a kind of formal Japanese called *keigo*. *Keigo* is a style of speech that is considered very polite. There's different levels, but Kaoruko is using a rather common style that is typical for or towards customers, business acquaintances, or between two people who may have a distant, but polite relationship. It's also the kind of language a well-mannered young person might use with their teachers, adults, or people they respect. On the other hand, polite language is not typically used between acquaintances of the same age or friends. For example, Kaoruko doesn't use it when speaking to her friends from Kikyo!

Special Chapter 2.5: That Regular Girl





...SAME AS ALWAYS, HUH?

RINTARO TSUMUGI

Sign: Public Chidori High School

都立千鳥高等学校

...AND CHIDORI HIGH, A SCHOOL FOR IDIOTS...

Sign: Private Kikyo Girls' High School

私立桔梗学園女子高等学校

KIKYO GIRLS' HIGH FOR WELL-BRED YOUNG LADIES...

DESPITE STANDING NEXT TO EACH OTHER...

...OUR SCHOOLS NEVER INTERACT.

2 — 1

YOU KNOW HOW THESE KIKYO FOLKS...

...NEVER OPEN THOSE CURTAINS?

WHAT, IS HE STILL HUNG UP ON THAT FIGHT FROM BEFORE?

I'D FALL ASLEEP ON THE SPOT!

IMAGINE HAVING CLASSES LIKE THAT!

DOESN'T THAT MAKE IT DARK AS HECK?

SHOHEI USAMI

C'MON, DON'T SAY IT LIKE THAT...

ISN'T IT GREAT HOW THEY SPELL IT OUT FOR US?

BUT THEY PUT UP WITH IT BECAUSE THEY HATE OUR GUTS THAT MUCH.

SAKU NATSUSAWA

AT THIS POINT, WE'RE USED TO IT.

THERE'S NO USE THINKING ABOUT IT, RIGHT?

BUT...

AYATO YORITA

When that one girl bumped into you.

YOU MEAN DURING THAT TROUBLE IN FRONT OF THE SCHOOL GATE?

That hurt like hell!

BUT THAT **SMACK** TO THE JAW I GOT LAST TIME WAS TOO MUCH, ALL RIGHT?!

YOU SURE DIDN'T SEEM BOTHERED WHEN WE WENT TO KARAOKE AFTER.

OH, I KNOW THAT!

NORMALLY, I WOULDN'T CARE WHAT THEIR DEAL IS...

...

KATAK

DID YOU GET HERE EARLY AGAIN?

SUBARU HOSHINA

!

2-A

GOOD MORNING, KAORUKO.

MORN-
ING...

SUBARU.

KAORUKO WAGURI

I WANNA STUDY AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE BEFORE HOMEROOM STARTS!

AND OF COURSE I DID!

I REALLY HAVE TO LEARN A THING OR TWO FROM YOU.

HM?

YOU KNOW...

AYU AND SUZUKA TOLD ME...

...!

IN FRONT OF CHIDORI'S SCHOOL GATE.

...THAT YOU GOT INVOLVED IN A FIGHT...

YOU DIDN'T GET HURT, DID YOU?

I'M SO SORRY I COULDN'T BE THERE WITH YOU...

That idea didn't even cross my mind!

I... I GUESS THAT'S TRUE! WHOOPS!

Yeah, I heard...

BUT COULDN'T YOU HAVE JUST LEFT IT NEXT TO THE FLOWER BED?

Since I happened to see who dropped it!

I FOUND IT THAT MORNING, SO I WAS WAITING FOR THE OWNER AFTER SCHOOL...

SEE... UM...OH! SOMEONE DROPPED SOMETHING!

PLUS... IT WAS MY FAULT ANYWAY!

WHY ARE *YOU* THE ONE APOLOGIZING?!

I CAN'T STAND THEM.

REALLY...

FWSH

...RIGHT NEXT TO THAT DEN OF BARBA-RIANS?

WHY DOES OUR SCHOOL HAVE TO BE...

...

...!

patisse

Plain

YOU CAN'T PUT A SCARY-LOOKING GUY LIKE ME AT THE REGISTER!

AND I KEEP TELLING THEM...

I SWEAR... THEY THINK THEY CAN ASK ME TO DROP EVERYTHING AND FILL IN WHENEVER JUST BECAUSE I'M THEIR SON...

SIGH

I HAD TO SPRINT HERE FROM THE STATION...

I'M ALREADY EXHAUST-ED...

LET'S SEE...

TAP

ANYWAY, MOM SAID WE'VE GOT A CAKE ORDER TODAY.

!

KCHAK

...WHAT?

Wagu

THAT NAME ON THE ORDER...

5:30 PM...

GOOD EVEN-ING...!
UM...

W-
WELCOME...!

WAGURI-
SAN...!

JUST A MOMENT. I'LL GO GRAB IT.

AH... SURE!

TAT TAT

I CAME HERE TO PICK UP THE BIRTH-DAY CAKE WE ORDERED...

KREAK

SORRY FOR THE WAIT...

...AND A LITTLE WHILE AGO, WE STARTED CHATTING.

A REGULAR OF OURS...

THAT'S KAORUKO WAGURI-SAN.

...

AH...! I'M SORRY!

It's fine.

SHE'S A GIRL WHO LOVES CAKE...

AS WELL AS EATING IN GENERAL.

ALL THE CAKES IN THE DISPLAY LOOK SO... DELICIOUS, I COULDN'T HELP IT!

WAP

WOO-OOW!

Happy Birthday

THEN...

LET'S SEE IF EVERYTHING IS TO YOUR LIKING.

IS THIS CAKE FOR SOMEONE IN YOUR FAMILY?

YES! MY MOTHER ORDERED IT, BUT I CAME TO PICK IT UP...

HER EYES ARE SPARK-LING...

YES, IT'S PERFECT!

THANK YOU SO MUCH!

I'LL LET MY FATHER KNOW. THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

He'll be thrilled.

NOW EVERYONE IN MY FAMILY IS A FAN OF THIS PLACE!

I BUY CAKES HERE ON MY WAY HOME ALL THE TIME...

AND I'M ALWAYS TALKING ABOUT HOW MUCH I LOVE THEM.

Hee hee.

OH...!

Was there one you wanted to eat...?

YOU WERE LOOKING AT OUR CAKES IN THE DISPLAY CASE EARLIER, RIGHT?

WILL THAT BE... ALL FOR YOUR ORDER?

N-NOT THIS TIME, THANK YOU!

GUUUH

...!

STAAARE

UM...

...ALL RIGHT.

SHE'S A STUDENT AT KIKYO GIRLS' HIGH.

AND...

I'LL STOP BY AGAIN ONCE MY MIDTERMS ARE OVER.

THANK YOU FOR COMING.

...

I WILL!

Ha ha ha!

Plain

UM...

PLEASE BE CAREFUL ON YOUR WAY HOME, OKAY?

I MEAN IT.

YOU KNOW...

SOME-THING THAT HAPPENED AT SCHOOL TODAY... MADE ME SAD.

...?

WAGURI-SAN?

SO...

I WAS FEELING A BIT DOWN...

...RIGHT NEXT TO THAT DEN OF BARBA-RIANS?

WHY DOES OUR SCHOOL HAVE TO BE...

I CAN'T STAND THEM.

REAL-LY.

CRIP

FWUSH

I GUESS... IT'S BECAUSE I RAN INTO YOU...

AND GOT TO TALK TO YOU LIKE THIS...

...BUT NOW...

I FEEL MUCH BETTER.

...VERY MUCH!
SO, THANK YOU...

AND...

SEE YOU.

IT'S SO WEIRD.

...

...AND WE WERE TALKING JUST FINE...

JUST NOW, SHE WAS SO CLOSE...

...THAT'S NOT ALLOWED.

BUT AS SOON AS WE PUT ON OUR UNIFORMS...

KIKYO GIRLS' HIGH FOR WELL-BRED YOUNG LADIES...

AND CHIDORI HIGH, A SCHOOL FOR IDIOTS...

TWO WORLDS...

ISN'T IT GREAT HOW THEY SPELL IT OUT FOR US?

BUT THEY PUT UP WITH IT BECAUSE THEY HATE OUR GUTS THAT MUCH.

AT THIS POINT, WE'RE USED TO IT.

THERE'S NO USE THINKING ABOUT IT, RIGHT?

...THAT WILL NEVER INTERACT.

I WONDER...

...IF THERE WILL EVER COME A DAY...

...WHEN THROUGH THE CUR-TAINS...

...OF THAT SCHOOL ACROSS FROM MINE...

SOME LIGHT WILL MANAGE TO SHINE.